EXCLUSIVE:

Sportbike Shootout of the Year

We Find Out Which GP-Replica Rules the Backroads

CYCLE GUIDE

OCTOBER 1985
$1.75 CC 02763

**Honda NS400R vs.
Suzuki RG500 Gamma vs.
Yamaha RZV500R**

Win the Bike of your Dreams in CYCLE GUIDE'S ALL NEW 1985 SUPER $50,000 SWEEPSTAKES #2

No Purchase Necessary—see inside for details or write CYCLE GUIDE, 20916 Higgins Court, Torrance, CA 90501 for entry form.

**Yamaha Virago 1000,
R600R vs. Yamaha TT600**

PLUS: Street Racing at the Isle of Man

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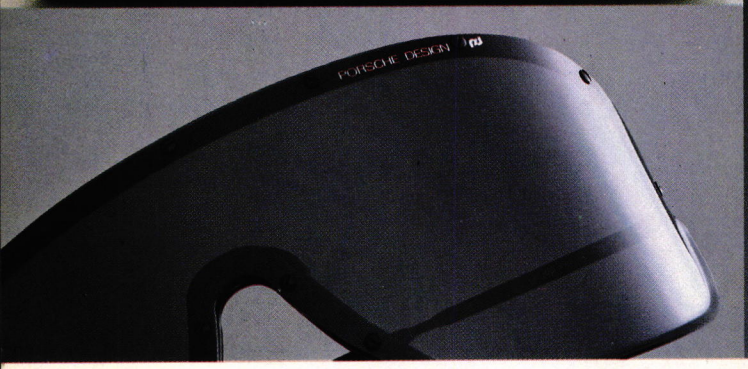

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Why get ripped off by the high price of other high-tech helmets? Instead, get the incomparable style and prestige of a **Carrera**, Germany's finest–not for well over a hundred dollars–but for an amazing **$79**! Or two for only **$69** each! Either way, it's an absolute **steal**.

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Carrera Sizing Chart	
Head Measure	**Helmet Size**
21¼"-21⅝"	Small
22"-22½"	Medium
22¾"-23¼"	Large
23½"-24⅛"	X-Large

And when you get your new **Carrera**, just don't let on it was such a steal!

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or write:

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QUOTE: "But riding these bikes in town is like going to dinner with a hooker; it's pleasant enough, but it isn't really why you get together."
—Pg. 23

Contents

VOL. 19 NO. 10 OCTOBER 1985

TWO-STROKE TOUR DE FORCE

18 FROM PRODUCTION LINE TO FINISH LINE *stage setting for the two-stroke tourney*—by Jim Miller
20 YAMAHA RZV500R *a year-old veteran under attack*—by Marc Cook
21 HONDA NS400R *a cylinder down, but not out*—by Jim Miller
22 SUZUKI RG500 GAMMA *square-four from square one*—by Jerry Smith
23 THE FINAL CONFLICT *after the smoke clears*—by Jim Miller

TEST

44 YAMAHA XV1000 VIRAGO *Thurston, I must have one*—by Jerry Smith

FEATURES

41 ISLE OF MAN: AN ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE *racetrack renderings*—by Eric Gustavson
46 NÜRBURGRING RIDING SCHOOL *class 'Ring*—by Charles Everitt
50 ISLE OF MAN TT RACES *more than a just a race*—by Dain Gingerelli
53 MAD SUNDAY *among Manx's madmen*—by Dain Gingerelli

PRODUCT EVALUATION

49 SBS BRAKE PADS *Danish disc warmers*—by Marc Cook

GUIDE LINES

33 COMING SOON *Bimota gets ducky and HRD grooms its horse*
35 RUMORS *tiny turbos and more-virile Viragos*

OFF-ROAD

55 INSIDE LINES *Isle trials*
56 PRODUCT EVALUATION: OFFROAD PRODUCTS QUICK-ACCESS TOOL BELT *a strap-on for your Snap-Ons*—by David Dewhurst
58 COMPARISON TEST: HONDA XR600R vs. YAMAHA TT600 *single-variable fun equation*—by David Dewhurst

SPORT LINES

61 GP EXOTICA *a peek into the paddock*
69 PIT BITS *Randy's hare-razing experience*
70 WINNERS AND LOSERS *road and track*

COLUMNS & DEPTS

9 CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE *better living through specifications*
10 SETTING IT RIGHT *can we build one for you?*
11 CONTACT POINTS *heat stroke*
12 VOICE FROM THE WILDERNESS *just another day at Mac's*
14 MOTOMART *stock options*
72 LETTERS *reader's revenge*

ON THE COVER: Cycle Guide's own bandito, Dain Gingerelli, makes for the border with an outlaw Suzuki RG500 Gamma—only one of three illegal repliracers smuggled in for our contraband comparison. David Dewhurst caught the action as Dain—disguised as Everitt—fled from pursuing Border Patrol agents on his way to our concealed test site.

TAKING IT TO THE LIMIT.

INTRODUCING THE VULCAN. IF YOU DON'T LOOK BAD, WE DON'T LOOK GOOD.

But we do. Because the Vulcan is bad. And that's good.

Kawasaki's first V-twin is a long, low, mean street cruiser.

The Vulcan takes style, technology and performance to new limits. And gives you the freedom, the confidence and the smarts to be whoever you are.

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Always wear a helmet and appropriate apparel. Call 1-800-447-4700 for the Motorcycle Safety Foundation beginner or expert course near you.

Take a look at the Vulcan. You'll like what you see. As well as what you hear. And what you feel.

Those big pistons make it rumble. And big torque makes it pull hard. There's no waiting for the revs to build. This is a big city bike.

Kawasaki's Vulcan has shaft drive and hydraulic valve adjusters for low maintenance. And air shocks and air-assisted forks for a smoother ride.

Its soul is 700cc of liquid-cooled V-twin. Eight valves. Double overhead cams. Twin plugs.

The cylinders angle symmetrically at 55 degrees. Double balancers keep things running smoothly. And horsepower takes care of everything else.

The 1985 Vulcan V-twin sets exciting new limits on boulevard power and style.

You are what you ride. So choose your Vulcan carefully.

It's a bad reflection on you.

Kawasaki

TAKING IT TO THE LIMIT

Specifications subject to change without notice. Availability may be limited.

YOU HAVE 12 CHANCES TO WIN THE MOTORCYCLE OF YOUR DREAMS IN CYCLE GUIDE'S ALL NEW...

1985 $50,

You are invited to enter the **CYCLE GUIDE 1985 SUPER $50,000 SWEEPSTAKES #2.** You may be the **LUCKY GRAND PRIZE WINNER** who will drive away with a Suzuki Quadracer, ALT125F 3-wheeler, and RM250 dirt bike, or a BMW K100 with a sporty EML Sidecar, or a full dress Yamaha Venture Royale.

Or maybe you'll win one of **412 other great prizes**—including Hyperbikes, Sportbikes, Helmets, Gloves, Tankbags, and more! With a total of 12 bikes to be given away, you have **12** chances to **WIN** that special motorcycle you've always wanted. **SEND YOUR ENTRY TODAY!**

And, if you like, you may subscribe to CYCLE GUIDE for only 64¢ an issue. You don't have to buy a thing to enter, but you should know about CYCLE GUIDE'S LOWEST POSSIBLE RATE—

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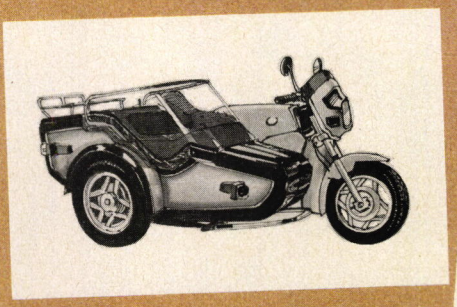
YOU SAVE $6.99 OFF THE REGULAR SUBSCRIPTION PRICE!
YOU SAVE $12.26 OFF THE COVER PRICE!

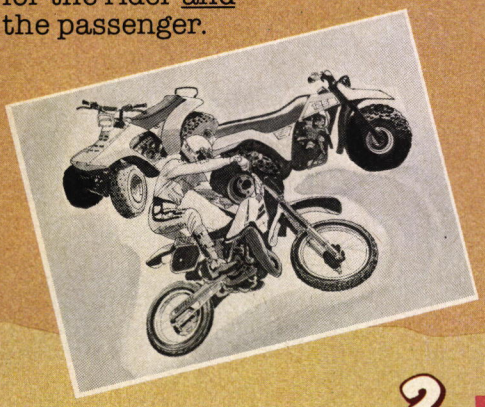
Whether you order or not is up to you, but either way, send in your **SUPER $50,000 SWEEPSTAKES ENTRY TODAY!** This is a brand new contest—even if you entered last time, you'll still want to send in your entry right away. It could make you the proud owner of one of these fabulous prizes:

CYCLE GUIDE IS GIVING AWAY THE BIGGEST AND BEST GRAND PRIZES EVER—YOUR CHOICE OF A COMPLETE OFF-ROAD PACKAGE; A MOTORCYCLE WITH A SIDECAR; OR A SUPER TURN-KEY TOURING RIG

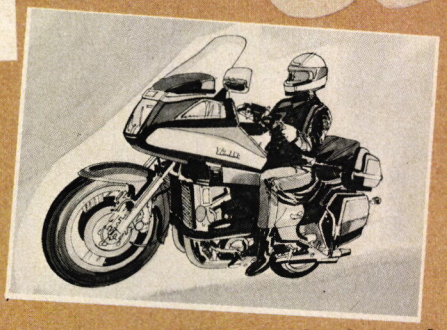
1 GRAND PRIZE



BMW K100/EML SPORT SIDECAR When you take Europe's most significant motorcycle and combine it with EML's sport sidecar, you've got the class act in motorcycling, for the rider and the passenger.



SUZUKI RM250 & ALT125 & QUADRACER Suzuki Triple-threat package: the latest RM250 motocross weapon combined with the fun-packed four-stroke ALT125 three-wheeler and the full-tilt Quadracer.



YAMAHA VENTURE ROYALE Take equal parts sporting dash and touring flash, and you've got the Venture Royale. Yamaha's flagship tourer combines vee-four power and handling that would do justice to a sportbike.

3 FIRST PRIZES

KAWASAKI 900 NINJA With a top speed of 151 mph, the Ninja is the absolute fastest production motorcycle around, with handling to match.

YAMAHA FJ1100 The most versatile hyperbike you can buy, Yamaha's FJ1100 has it all: speed, comfort, and superb handling.

SUZUKI GS1150E One of the quickest motorcycles in the world, and the best all-around literbike since Suzuki's own GS1100.

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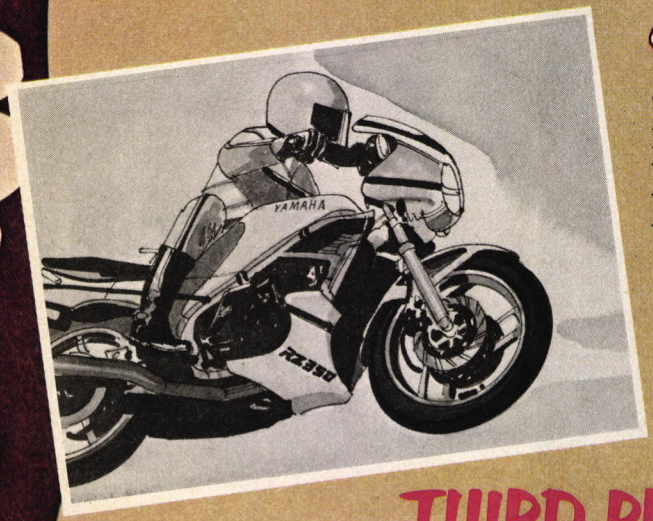
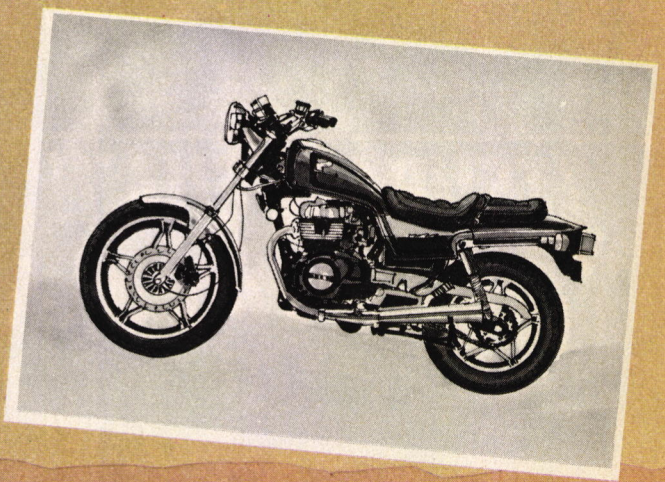
ALL NEW CONTEST

ENTER TODAY — All Prizes Will Be Awarded No Purchase Necessary — No Entry Fee



4 SECOND PRIZES

YAMAHA RZ350 Perhaps one of the best known motorcycles in the world, and for '85, the Kenny Roberts-signature RZ retains its title as the only two-stroke sportbike in the U.S.A.



4 THIRD PRIZES

HONDA 450 NIGHTHAWK A high-tech sport-custom guaranteed to provide you with the thrill of motorcycling.

25 FOURTH PRIZES

LAZER LZ2 HELMETS Lazer's all-new full-coverage street helmet made of Ronfalin features a ventilated, aerodynamic design.

50 FIFTH PRIZES

BAGMAN 14 LITER TANKBAGS Made of Cordura nylon, this rugged piece of soft luggage is everything you need in a tankbag, with features such as twin side pockets and a clear map pocket.

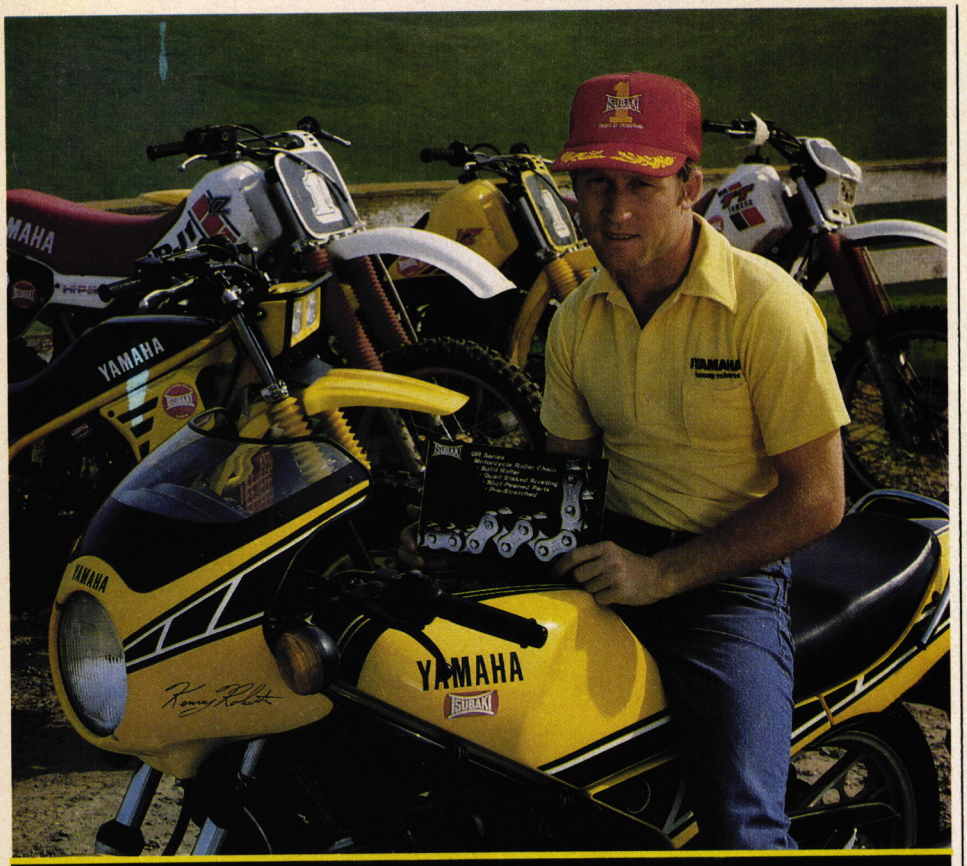
125 SIXTH PRIZES

BATES ROADRACE GLOVES Whether you use them for sport riding or touring—or anything in between—Bates' gloves will give you the racer's touch.

200 SEVENTH PRIZES

TEKNA MICRO-LITES A miniature version of the most reliably designed lights in the world, the Micro-Lite allows you to carry a powerful flashlight in situations you never dreamed were possible.

One entry gives you 412 chances to win one of 412 total prizes—with a total value of OVER **$50,000!**



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Kenny Roberts

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CYCLE GUIDE(USPS 535-210) is published monthly except during November by Cycle Guide Publications, Inc., 20916 Higgins Court, Torrance, California 90501. Second Class Postage paid at Torrance, California and at additional mailing offices.

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS are welcomed by Cycle Guide Publications, Inc., but cannot be considered unless guaranteed exclusive. Cycle Guide cannot be responsible for unsolicited material or damage to same in mails. If material is to be returned, include self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: United States, $13.98 one year, $24.00 two years, $32.00 three years. In Canada, add $5.00 per year, all other countries add $8.00 per year. Single copy rate $1.75.

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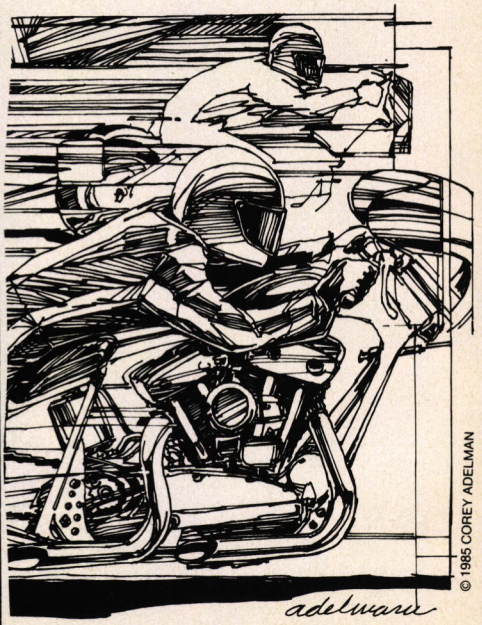

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CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE

Cycle Guide's catalog of recent test hardware—no brag, just fact

OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WRX 250-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.1/11.6	232	30.0/4.65	6
Cagiva WMX 250-'84	January '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.7	221	28.0/4.65	6
Can-Am 320 Trials-'84	October '84	Trials	Two-stroke	4.8/4.5	205	25.5/3.00	6
Honda ATC250R-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.8/8.0	311	N/A	5
Honda ATC350X-'85	September '85	ATV	Four-stroke	8.0/7.0	324	23.0/1.4	6
Honda CR125R-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.3	195	27.2/4.29	6
Honda CR250R-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	216	26.7/4.13	5
Honda CR500R-'85	February '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	232	27.5/4.41	5
Honda XR200R-'84	August '84	Enduro	Four-stroke	9.9/9.6	235	26.0/4.13	6
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda XR600R-'85	October '85	Trail	Four-stroke	10.9/11.4	284	28.0/4.65	5
Husqvarna 250WRX-'85	August '85	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	239	27.0/4.72	6
Husqvarna 400WR-'84	July '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.0/11.2	242	28.5/5.16	6
Husqvarna 500CR-'85	April '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.9	235	27.0/4.72	4
Husqvarna 510TE-'85	March '85	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.6/11.9	263	28.5/5.16	6
Kawasaki KDX200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.9	214	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KX125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	195	27.5/4.57	6
Kawasaki KX250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	220	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.6/8.2	319	N/A	5
Kawasaki KLR600-'84	September '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.2/8.3	322	29.5/4.80	5
M-Star 250 Supercross-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.7	230	27.0/4.72	5
Suzuki Quadracer 250-'85	May '85	ATV	Two-stroke	7.2/8.1	326	N/A	5
Suzuki Quadrunner 250-'84	October '84	ATV	Four-stroke	1.0/N/A	384	N/A	5
Suzuki RM125-'85	May '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.4/11.8	202	29.0/4.84	6
Suzuki RM250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.9	220	27.8/4.41	5
Yamaha BW200-'85	April '85	Trail	Four-stroke	6.3/6.6	249	27.3/3.46	5
Yamaha IT200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.6	211	28.0/4.53	6
Yamaha TT600-'85	October '85	Trail	Four-stroke	11.3/10.7	283	28.0/4.65	5
Yamaha TY350-'85	July '85	Trials	Two-stroke	6.5/4.8	193	23.0/1.93	6
Yamaha XT250-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.7/7.9	266	28.3/4.60	6
Yamaha YZ125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.3	194	27.7/4.57	6
Yamaha YZ250-'85	June '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.3	219	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'84	June '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.7	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW K100RS-'84	October '84	4I/G	987.2	12.381/109.48	133	532	39–54	139
BMW R80-'85	September '85	2C/G	782.5	13.357/98.36	114	439	37–52	148
H-D FXRS Low Glide-'84	January '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.917/94.57	112	575	38–48	140
H-D FXRT Sport Glide-'85	October '84	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	14.180/90.36	92	640	28–51	126
H-D XLH 883 Sportster-'86	September '85	45 deg. 2D/F	882.9	14.045/92.40	106	467	37–67	131
H-D XLH Sportster-'85	February '85	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.742/95.94	111	490	43–58	146
Honda Gold Wing Ltd Ed.-'85	March '85	4C/G	1181.9	13.346/98.36	113	810	37–45	134
Honda NS250R-'85	May '85	90 deg. 2D/F††	249.3	13.091/101.58	121	339	27–38	135
Honda NS400R-'85	October '85	90 deg. 3D/F††	387.4	12.324/108.69	125	392	25–45	135
Honda VF500F Interceptor-'84	July '84	90 deg. 4D/F	497.6	12.484/106.00	126	419	33–48	123
Honda VF700C Magna-'85	August '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.390/108.82	128	520	34–47	131
Honda VF700F Interceptor-'84	October '84	90 deg. 4D/F	698.9	12.323/106.50	124	512	37–48	136
Honda VF700S Sabre-'85	January '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.358/109.09	121	514	28–48	136
Honda VF1000R-'85	July '85	90 deg. 4D/F	998.4	11.308/121.78	149	578	20–42	135
Honda VT1100C Shadow-'85	June '85	45 deg. 2D/G	1099.2	13.022/100.33	112	560	33–44	127
Honda V65 Magna-'85	February '85	90 deg. 4D/G	1098.0	11.440/118.42	142	566	34–46	133
Kawasaki 454 LTD-'85	September '85	2A/H	454.1	13.386/97.08	102	427	37–53	125
Kawasaki GPz550-'85	March '85	4A/F	553.8	12.478/104.89	121	432	44–54	137
Kawasaki GPz750-'84	May '84	4A/F	739.0	12.114/110.97	135	502	37–47	120
Kawasaki GPz1100-'84	May '84	4A/F	1089.9	11.312/120.80	145	560	24–48	120
Kawasaki Eliminator-'85	April '85	4A/G	908.2	11.405/117.49	134	569	22–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja-'85	August '85	4A/F	908.2	11.175/123.79	151	535	32–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja 600R-'85	March '85	4A/F	592.6	12.124/109.09	135	448	40–48	135
Laverda RGS 1000-'84	December '83	3A/F	980.8	12.565/106.50	130	556	25–40	140
Suzuki GS550ES-'85	May '85	4A/F	572.3	12.551/106.50	119	447	33–48	133
Suzuki GS700E-'85	January '85	4A/F	699.5	11.978/112.21	125	485	27–53	140
Suzuki GS1150E-'85	June '85	4A/F	1135.4	11.032/121.78	146	529	30–55	138
Suzuki GV700GL Madura-'85	Nov./Dec. '84	82 deg. 4D/G	698.5	13.307/102.15	111	546	23–45	143
Suzuki GV1200GL Madura-'85	February '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1165.9	11.364/117.18	140	576	28–45	131
Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade LX-'85	August '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1360.4	12.881/101.12	115	806	24–49	155
Suzuki RG500 Gamma-'85	October '85	Square-Four/F††	498.5	11.991/113.20	N/A	374	22–42	134
Suzuki VS700GLF Intruder-'85	July '85	2D/G	699.7	12.998/101.01	112	442	44–63	132
Yamaha FJ1100-'85	April '85	4A/F	1097.6	11.002/123.28	147	543	30–47	138
Yamaha FZ750-'85	June '85	45 deg. 4A/F	749.6	11.317/118.57	140	485	31–50	129
Yamaha Maxim X-'85	May '85	4A/G	697.3	11.779/113.63	121	505	25–47	135
Yamaha RZ350-'84	July '84	2A/F††	347.4	13.529/97.61	111	357	26–53	122
Yamaha RZV500R-'84	October '85	4D/F††	499.7	12.409/107.52	134	422	25–53	147
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	March '84	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	12.759/101.46	124	752	37–53	137
Yamaha V-Max-'85	May '85	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	10.922/127.47	151	596	23–32	137
Yamaha XV1000 Virago-'85	October '85	75 deg. 2D/G	981.0	12.993/101.59	111	507	33–47	132

*__A__-Transverse, __B__-Vertical (single-cylinder only), __C__-Horizontally Opposed, __D__-Tandem Vee, __E__-Transverse Vee, __F__-Chain Final Drive, __G__-Shaft Final Drive, __H__-Belt Final Drive, __I__-Horizontal Longitudinal; † indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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Setting It Right

Off The Hook vs. Tailor-Made

Excuse me, while I slip onto something more comfortable.

• In writing here recently about my Dresda-CBX, I might not have made it clear that I did not leave that beloved bike behind when I came to live in the United States for a while. When I was looking for a place I liked enough to settle in, a motorcycle would have been more of a liability than an asset: I needed a car to carry all my remaining chattels, to shelter me until I had learned what to wear, and to store nourishment until I had learned where not to eat.

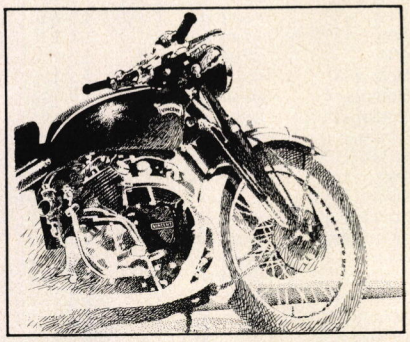
Once I had settled in Austin, Texas, a very pleasant place indeed, the desire to ride started to gnaw at me again. What a lovely place to be a motorcyclist, and what a lovely place to enjoy my own! With the aid of a friendly shipper in England, and a blessedly sympathetic customs officer in America, I soon had a crated motorcycle at the back door of my house, needing only a claw hammer and some gasoline to set me on the road again.

"Bliss was it in those days to be alive,"—the poet was almost spot-on—and to be *riding* was heaven. But it could not last, alas: I had to come back to the Land of UK, and after the financial depredations of a sabbatical year, I had to leave my six-cylinder soul mate behind. When, if ever, would I reach 155 mph on two wheels again, without worrying about warping and weaving?

The last time I spoke to the happy new owner of that memorable motorcycle, he said he had not yet ridden it beyond 130 mph. Knowing that his favorite routes are on the twistier hill-roads of Texas, I have a feeling he is nevertheless enjoying it at its best. There are nowadays three or four bikes which go as well, but I never encountered anything but other Dresdas that steered so well.

Most of them were a lot smaller and lighter, but Honda's incomparable CBX—the *real* CBX, the 1047cc six—defies miniaturization of the bike that must support it. The trouble is that, as I cultivate the frailty to which the passing years entitle me, I no longer fancy heaving such a mass of motorcycle out of a parking space on a cambered road. I am, in fact, engaged in the finalization of a new Rule of Thumb, which will declare that any motorcycle weighing more than twice as much as I do should have a reverse gear.

My next machine, then, must be lower and lighter. Alas, there are no small six-cylinder engines, and nothing else can be as good. How many times have I lamented that the original CBX was not a six-cylinder evolution of the 400 four? A 400 six would have charmed us, when the 1047 six inspired altogether too much awe in most of us. So the Big Ripper had gone; and before the Grim Reaper arrives, I want to enjoy a lighter leaner.



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It will have to be tailor-made, of course. Like clothes bought "off the hook," motorcycles bought off the showroom floor are always ill-fitting and an endless source of frustration. Provisions for adjusting the riding position to suit one's size have gradually disappeared since the 1950s, when Vincent gear-pedals even allowed for different lengths of feet. Further back in the days of the sprung saddle, the best of such items were graded according to riders' weights: The 1921 Model H Triumph which I employed as a weekday hack when it was only 30 years old had its saddle-frame stamped "10–12 STONE," which translates to 140–168 pounds.

Today's manufacturers show little such consideration for the rider. The fat will be jarred, the thin will be bounced. If you are too tall, you must be lopped; if too short, stretched. In short, the standard motorcycle is the modern bed of Procrustes.

So why are there not more tailors of bespoke bikes? Builders of fancy frames can be found everywhere, but woe betide the customer who has a different shape or size from the proprietor. A car manufacturer could not maintain that attitude and survive long: Lotus only began to make a respectable profit when it added a 6-foot-4 engineer to its management team. Prior to that, the boss, Colin Chapman, dismissed any customer taller than his 5-foot-8 height as a freak.

Similarly derisive comments are flung at me when I visit the Dresda works, but only in fun. Proprietor David Degens might be built like an oaken orangutan, but he is not just a vendor of frame kits designed to fit only him; he does actually build bikes for specific people. On the stocks when I called in the spring was one for a 5-foot-4 Japanese.

No, not many firms export motorcycles to Japan. Nor can there be many enjoying, like Dresda, a lively demand for machines such as they used to make 15 or 20 years ago. Some 10 years ago, the definitive Dresda had an enlarged and tuned CB750 Honda four in a light Featherbed-inspired frame. Apart from a twin-lamp endurance-racing fairing, a four-into-one exhaust, and Lockheed discs and calipers, there was little more to it, for it had to be light. The one I tried at the end of a year on Europe's 24-hour circuits was possibly the very best bike I have ever ridden.

One of Degens' customers from those days recently reached the same conclusion. Having bought and tried all the increasingly elaborate affairs the famous makers have offered since, he found that motorcycles had not profited from the extra mass and complexity; back he went to Dresda and ordered a new bike, just like his original one.

The idea caught on, and as it spread, it was refined further. People began to recall the featherlight yet surgically precise Tritons with which Dresda first made their name; tuned Triumph twins in Norton chassis at first, and then in a more refined frame of Degens' own design, and lately with a stupendous double-drum front brake housing eight leading shoes, all balanced and equalized by an exiguous arrangement of bicycle spokes. It was quite a stopper, not least because there were only 300 pounds of motorcycle to stop.

That also means only 300 pounds to prop when it is static; and only 300 pounds to prod when it is mobile; and only 300 pounds to divert when a corner or hazard comes close. A small wonder—and no wonder that Degens' workshop is now full of them, all ordered in advance.

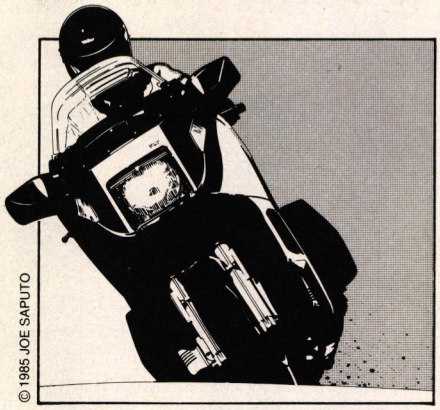
Evidently there are quite a lot of folk around who want something lighter and more manageable than today's masterpieces of intellectual challenge and athletic defiance. If I did not think the Triumph twin so reprehensible an engine, I might be tempted to join them. . . .

—L.J.K. Setright

Contact Points

Summertime Blues

Sermons on the solstice.



• It must be the heat. With summer's rising temperatures come aggravated travelers, and some dog-day drivers almost seem to become demons bent on vengeance and retribution. So, astute riders learn to steer clear on Furnace Freeway. But it's easy to understand why motorcyclists become natural objects of envy (or malice) to the overheated motorist. To the commuter jammed in traffic, steaming in his station wagon, a rider evaporating into the distance can be hard to take.

For us, though, the bright sunlight of a summer day serves to crystallize the landscape, revealing the hard edges in sharp relief. Clarity shines up from the roadway, and traction is delivered to the surface. It's summertime, and the ridin' is easy.

Not that summer doesn't also bake up a few moto-annoyances other than disgruntled drivers. Such as swinging your leg over a fried vinyl seat and remembering, just a tad late, that you're wearing shorts. Or when you're talking sweet to Sara down at the Tastee Freez, with your boot hooked jauntily on the passenger peg—until you notice the singed smell of your pant cuff disintegrating on the muffler. Or when you look in the mirror after a business meeting, and find that you actually *do* have bugs in your teeth. Stuff like that.

Certainly summer has its seductions for motorcyclists, and among them is the illusion of invincibility. Exemption. Immunity from the laws of fate, physics and Murphy. The sun shines brightly, the road is clear, the tires warmed; the suspension is working perfectly, the engine belting out a high-horsepower tune. Everything is right. *You can do anything.*

Wrong.

Sure, there are times when the connection between yourself, the bike and the road is locked in solid. But they exist only as moments because they depend so critically on the dynamic balance of *all* the conditions at work. And, on public roads, those conditions can change suddenly. And do.

There is simply no place in the Perfect Ride equation for variables like invisible puddles of transmission fluid, a station wagon's unannounced U-turn or the stray dog, rabbit, etc. And then there's the road itself. Not when it switches from smooth to pocked, or even from paved to not, but when it just bends in a way you didn't expect. You've got the rhythm of the road dialed, running right at eight-tenths (the unwritten limit on public byways), and the road fools you.

Recently I played the fool, and it was on a road I knew. But summertime fun had me by the follicles, and I was in the groove and hookin'. Then I found myself well outside the proper line for a crested, off-camber right-hander. Skid, somehow, is too delicate a word to describe the result. It was a good 30-foot slide, including that fearsome millisecond with the rear wheel locked, and a terribly tardy apex. (In future bench racing sessions, I will refer to this as a braking drift.)

The thing is, I *knew* that turn was there. My mental road atlas had charted it long ago, but the vaporous spirits of the summer solstice had lulled my sensibilities. So the lesson was clear: Too much fun in the sun can transport us past the adhesive boundaries, even on familiar routes. Country road cross-ups bring such truths into sharp, immediate focus.

Another sobering surprise for sunshine riders is the unexpected bicyclist, or a gaggle thereof. The fitness boom has brought tribes of pedalists to even the remote roads that motorcyclists had come to consider personal sanctuaries. But the 10-speeders do have equal rights to the road. The issues aren't impoliteness, incompetence or downright stupidity on either side, although examples of each obviously occur in both camps. The real problem hinges simply on the physical matter of closing speeds. And we serve ourselves well by recognizing that evasive action is the responsibility of the overtaker—not the overtaken.

But the big-time bummer of my summer came not on the road, but in the mail. From the Department of Motor Vehicles, it carried the ominous heading: "FORMAL NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUSPEND." I liked the phrase. A sort of polite invitation to your own lynching. It was a computerized letter, signed by no one, but the tone was personal and familiar:

"You are in danger of being legally classified as a negligent operator. This letter is formal notice that the department intends to suspend your driving privilege unless your record improves dramatically.

"Look at your record! Think about it! If you continue to drive as you have been, we intend to take away your drivers (*sic*) license for six months. Can you afford to have that happen?"

Well, I've looked at my record! Four speeding tickets in one year! And I've thought about it! And I don't like it!

How did I become a negligent operator? The machine states: "What is a negligent operator? Negligent driving is determined by a point system. Major convictions, such as hit-and-run, reckless driving, or driving under the influence count two points. Any other traffic convictions involving unsafe operation receive one point."

There is some solace in knowing I'm only half as negligent as the reckless, the drunk or the hit-and-runner. But hardly enough to compensate for being suspended into immobility. The notion that 65-in-a-55 equates with unsafe operation probably was hatched by a sweltering bureaucrat caught in a mid-August traffic jam.

But will the computer convince me that four speeding tickets make me a negligent operator? Maybe the same day it persuades the Ayatollah Khomeini to become a Lutheran. No, it will need more than arbitrary point scales and non sequitur reasoning to establish my negligence. Yet what can a person do, faced with the might of IBM/DMV and its armed troopers? Even now, this column could be keystroking into the megabyte mainframe at DMV Security Central. The district hangman might be reading orders on his home display terminal: "NegOp at large. Disposition: TERMINATE WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE."

That late-night knock at the door, should it come, will bring new meaning to the summer lament: "Cripes, it must be the heat." —*T.J. Rafferty*

Voice From The Wilderness

Mad Mac's

Don't park your bike on the couch.

• I swear, on Mother's Reader's Digest, the following is true, as near as can be made out through the intervening haze of years, beers and hard use. It was my personal odyssey through a gauntlet of motorcycle shops and bike boutiques that led me to Mac's Motor Works. I arrived there like a Pilgrim at Plymouth Rock—a fugitive from oppression.

My saga began with a BMW R90S and all the sociological baggage that implies. Although the bike was nice, and the shop owner and I went clear back to grammar school, as a steely eyed realist he understood there was a lot more fruit on the trees than I might drop in his lap—so to speak. Off the record, he could condone me changing my own oil, but in public such things were beyond the grasp of mortals. That's the way his fruit crop preferred it.

So you've got to know why I fell out of love with the Beemer and in heat with the first Moto Guzzi Le Mans I saw. I acquired one, and I rode it through some stirring adventures and loved it. Ultimately, though, I was driven out of love with the Guzzi experience one afternoon when the Le Mans got a frog in its throat and stuck a piston, while I had eyes only for a Ducati that dwindled in the distance. My Mo-Gu maven—a German—made elaborate moral preachments to the effect that clods such as I, who think with their right wrists and don't clean their float bowls after every meal, don't deserve to mount the machines from Moto Guzzi. By then, I'd had it to the eyes with Teutonic fussiness, and was not a little impressed with the relentless romp of the Duck's exhaust cadence, racketing over hill and dale as it became a speck on the skyline.

And then a miracle happened. This guy named Charlie Rogers, who has owned one of nearly everything worth having, called and said he's got a 900 SS and hears I've got a Le Mans. Would I be interested in swapping?

Suffice it to say the deal was made and I became one of the regulars at Mac's Motor Works, vee-twins our specialty. Which implied not only Ducati monopostos, carving precise arcs through back-country blacktop, but chopped Harley hardtails going lubbalubba out back of places you couldn't visit on parole.

The Motor Works represented a mixed metaphor not at all lost on Mac, who in his taciturn way reveled in the sociological extremes of his clientele. Mac bears the

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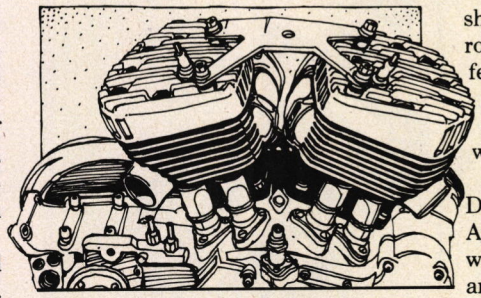

tattoos of what is popularly known as a misspent youth. He used to ride a Harley with the outlaw herd, but now he rides a Ducati with Hailwood fiberglass, and wears one of two T-shirts daily. Both are classics of commercial couture: One says, "I'd rather eat worms than ride a two-stroke," and the other, which delights the Ducati crowds, proclaims, "Ducati. The thinking man's Harley." The more cerebral 45 degree lads accept it as a backhanded compliment.

Happily, it was those sorts who brought their milk crates full of Shovelhead or Sporty motors into Mac's every 50,000 miles or so to get rebuilt. The ritual at Mac's, after having queued up your basket full of motor, was to wander over to the corner of the garage, where two Beaverboard partitions defined the McCluskey family living room. There, old friends would pay their respects to his wife Shelly, and dandle baby Sue on their knees. To say the family was close-knit is to understate: When a family works, eats, sleeps, recreates and defecates in the same 32 by 45 feet, either they are close-knit or some are dead and the remainder in jail. This family did everything within the four walls of Mac's Motor Works except bathe. That they did outdoors, in a homemade shower enclosure inside a fence Mac nailed to the back of the shop.

Unique and challenging as those arrangements were, what was more remarkable was the fact that none of the McCluskeys seemed to suffer from them. Mac and Shelly sustained bonds born of mutual respect, dependence and love. And Sue, crawling around looking like a newspaper, albino skin in contrast to blackened hands and knees, cut her teeth on con rods and grew to well-adjusted childhood, secure in the love of mom and dad and the solicitous concern of an extended family of robbers, rapists and roadracers. If there was concern for any member of the clan, it was that Sue might go blind for want of light, or that she or Shelly might collect a stray .22 round some afternoon when the boys were feeling patriotic. This latter was a momentary concern, manifested in the winter of '79 when the Ayatollah Khomeini was yanking Uncle Sam's whiskers.

One desultory afternoon, No Nickname Dave set a 2-by-12 chunk of fir with the Ayatollah's picture on it in front of the wood stove, pulled out his .22 automatic and offered to buy a round for whomever could put one between Khomeini's eyes. "Susan. Go take a nap," Mac said, ever the attentive daddy, and the afternoon passed into blissful twilight for three red-white-and-blue-blooded American boys, burning up .22 shorts in the living room of Mac's Motor Works. That sort of languorous cleansing of emotions—what Walt Whitman described as celebrating himself—never could have taken place in the BMW or Guzzi shops of my earlier experience. The lion lay down with the lamb at Mac's.

Only once did war clouds darken the horizon, yet not without cause. Pat Palmer, one of America's more remarkable unremarked Ducatistes, pulled up on the sidewalk one day while Mac, in a rare visit to the great out-of-doors, was entertaining a deputation of former confreres from The Soul Sinners M.C.

There were five chopped Harleys parked diagonally out front when Palmer hove into view. He roared to his usual, five-grand, radical-cam, won't-idle halt at one end of the formation and, awkward on account of being short—and being Palmer—and having next-to-no steering lock, hopped off and began wrestling the Duck onto its centerstand. He made it, too, but in so doing, stuck his fanny into the nearest Harley.

Which fell over. Into the next. Ibid. Op cit. And so on, until the last one lay on its side. Pat Palmer has since fallen off in Turn Nine at Riverside doing the ton, and he's been launched off a dirtbike into a boulder as big as a condo, but he's never been nearer death than on that day.

Mac has since lost his lease and moved to a country crossroads, where he and Shel deal feed to neighboring ranchers, and Sue gets regular doses of fresh air and sun. The Harley crowd still brings its scattered motors, and the boys with the scuffed toes drop in because the new location is at the other end of 45 miles of twisting blacktop. Some things never change. —*Jeff Smith*

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Motomart

Monthly moto-buylines.

Brooke No Foolishness: If nothing comes between you and your Hallmans, then you should consider Tech 2's new Bunsavers. They're designed to be worn under motocross pants, to reduce friction for more comfortable riding. Bunsavers are made of lycra, they feature a stitched-in chamois crotch, and they're available in blue only for a suggested retail price of $39.95. Get them from your Hallman dealer or from Hallman USA, Dept. CG, 315 W. Bradley, El Cajon, California 92020.

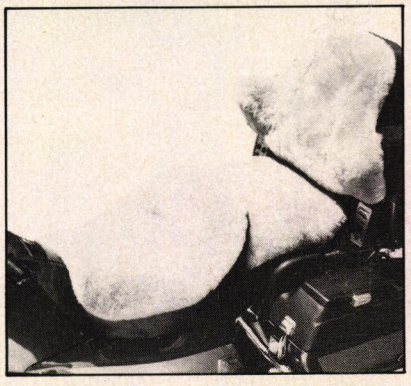
He Went That-a-Way: But *you* don't have to be on the run to wear Simpson's new Bandit helmet. The Bandit features a hard-coated, 0.080-inch-thick Lexan faceshield, and is equipped with Simpson's ratchet closure system. The helmet is Snell-'85-approved and comes in red, black or anthracite in regular hat sizes. Retail price for the Bandit is $199 from motorcycle dealers, or directly from Simpson Sports, Dept. CG, 22630 S. Normandie Ave., Torrance, California 90502.

Thunderpants: Thunderwear thinks you shouldn't let the threat of snow or the dark of cloud stop your off-road fun. And to that end, the firm offers its Multi-Purpose Bibbed Riding Pants. Constructed from 200-denier urethane-coated nylon, the pants are claimed to be waterproof, and include elastic reinforced suspenders, an elastic waistband and leg stirrups. They're available in sizes XS–XL in red/white or blue/white for a retail price of $49.95, from motorcycle dealers or from Thunderwear Inc., Dept. CG, 31736 "A" Rancho Viejo Road, San Juan Capistrano, California 92675.

Happy Fingers: Cosmopolitan Motors would like to please your palms with a pair of Italian-made Jollisport road-racing gloves. The Jollisports are constructed of goat skin, and feature Velcro closures on the gauntlets, studded palms and double layers of leather at the fingers and knuckles. The gloves come in sizes S–XL in black/gray, black/gray/red, white/blue and red/blue color schemes for a retail price of $44.95. For more information, contact Cosmopolitan Motors, Dept. CG, 301 Jacksonville Road, Hatboro, Pennsylvania 19040.

Wooly Cavalcade: Is that anything like a shaggy dog? No, but Mustang Woolee seat covers and backpads for Suzuki's Cavalcade are just as shaggy and a lot more comfortable to sit on. Woolees come color-matched to the Cavalcade, and there are Woolees for most other streetbikes 400cc and larger, too. Prices start at $99.95 for the seat cover and $29.95 for the backpad, from your motorcycle dealer, or you can contact Al Simmons Co. Inc., Dept CG, Town Hill Road, Terryville, Connecticut 06786, for more information.

Suited to Touring: After spending all that time getting your motorcycle ready for the long haul, outfit your body, too, in Spartan's two-piece, leather Summit touring suit. Features include a padded lower back panel, stretch sides and a three-way collar. The jacket and pants come in black/grey only. Suggested retail prices run from $194.95 and $151.95 for men's jacket and pants, to $183.95 and $143.95 for women's items. See your motorcycle dealer or contact Rocky Cycle Co., Dept. CG, P.O. Box 1431, Sunnyvale, California 94086.



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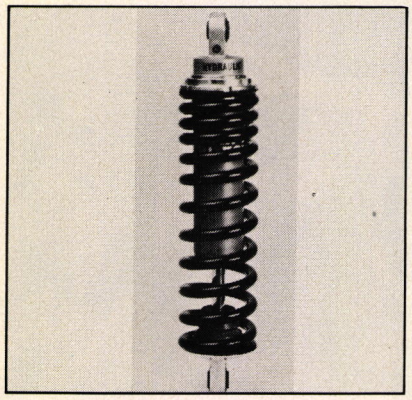
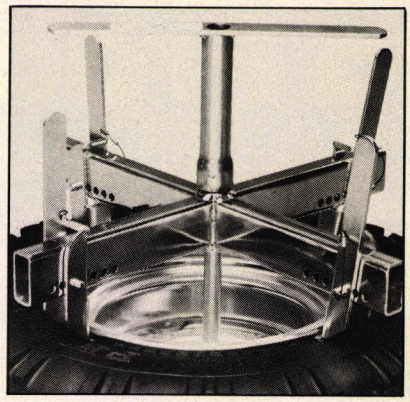
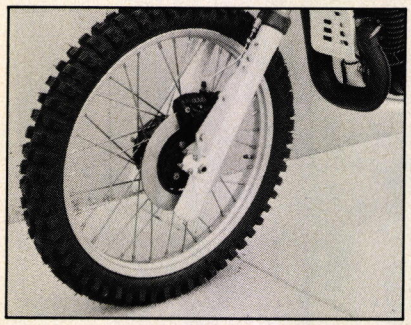


Shock Treatment: If you have only one shock absorber on your BMW, Koni thinks it should be the new 3014 series shock. Made for Monolever-style BMWs, it features an anodized aluminum body, adjustable preload and damping, and a triple-rate spring. Plus, the 3014 fits BMW K100s, and R80G/S and ST models from 1982–85, and carries a suggested retail price of $389.95. To find out more, contact Koni America, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 40, Culpeper, Virginia 22701.

And There Was Light: It's better to have a single flashlight than to curse the darkness, especially if you're stuck by the side of the road at night. Tekna recognizes that fact, and offers its Mono-Lith flashlight. The firm claims the 3-inch-long Mono-Lith, powered by a single lithium cell, is as bright as a flashlight that uses two C or D batteries, and that the lithium battery has a 10-year shelf life. In addition, the Mono-Lith features a twist-lock key ring, all for a suggested retail price of $14.95. To find out more, contact Tekna, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 849, Belmont, California 94002.

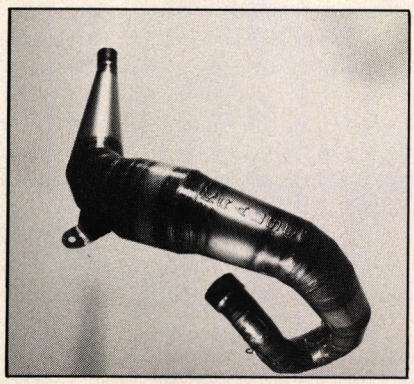


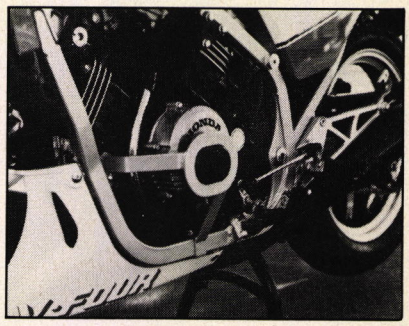
We Be Breakin': ATV tire beads are tougher to break than the lap record. Not even dancing on the tire will do the trick if you don't have the right tool—such as Kerker's new Bead-Eater II. Kerker says its Bead-Eater works on rims 6–13 inches in diameter, and is compatible with all current stock and aftermarket tire and wheel designs. Suggested retail price is $99.95, and you can get more information from Kerker, Dept. CG, 7900 Deering Ave., Canoga Park, California 91304.



Drummed Out Of Service: That old drum brake on the front of your Husky has been a valiant campaigner for several seasons, but now it's time to retire it with a bolt-on disc brake kit from Brembo. Designed to fit all Husky forks with 40mm stanchion tubes, the kit includes a master cylinder and caliper, caliper mounting bracket, stainless-steel disc, hub with bearings and axle, and all hydraulic hoses. You'll also need a set of front spokes for a 1982 KTM, which aren't included. Suggested retail price for the kit is $295 from Brembo America, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 730, Kenwood, California 95452.

Fire When Ready: Don't go up against the big guns without a lot of firepower—such as a Kannon from Krause Racing. Kannon pipes are designed for high-caliber competition, made of heat-treated 18-gauge alloy steel, and Krause claims they provide a significant improvement in horsepower. Krause has a full line of Kannons for 1985 ATVs, enduro and motocross bikes, and for many models back to 1973, too. Suggested retail prices start at $119.95, from your motorcycle dealer or Krause Racing, Dept. CG, 111 Fairbanks, Addison, Illinois 60101.





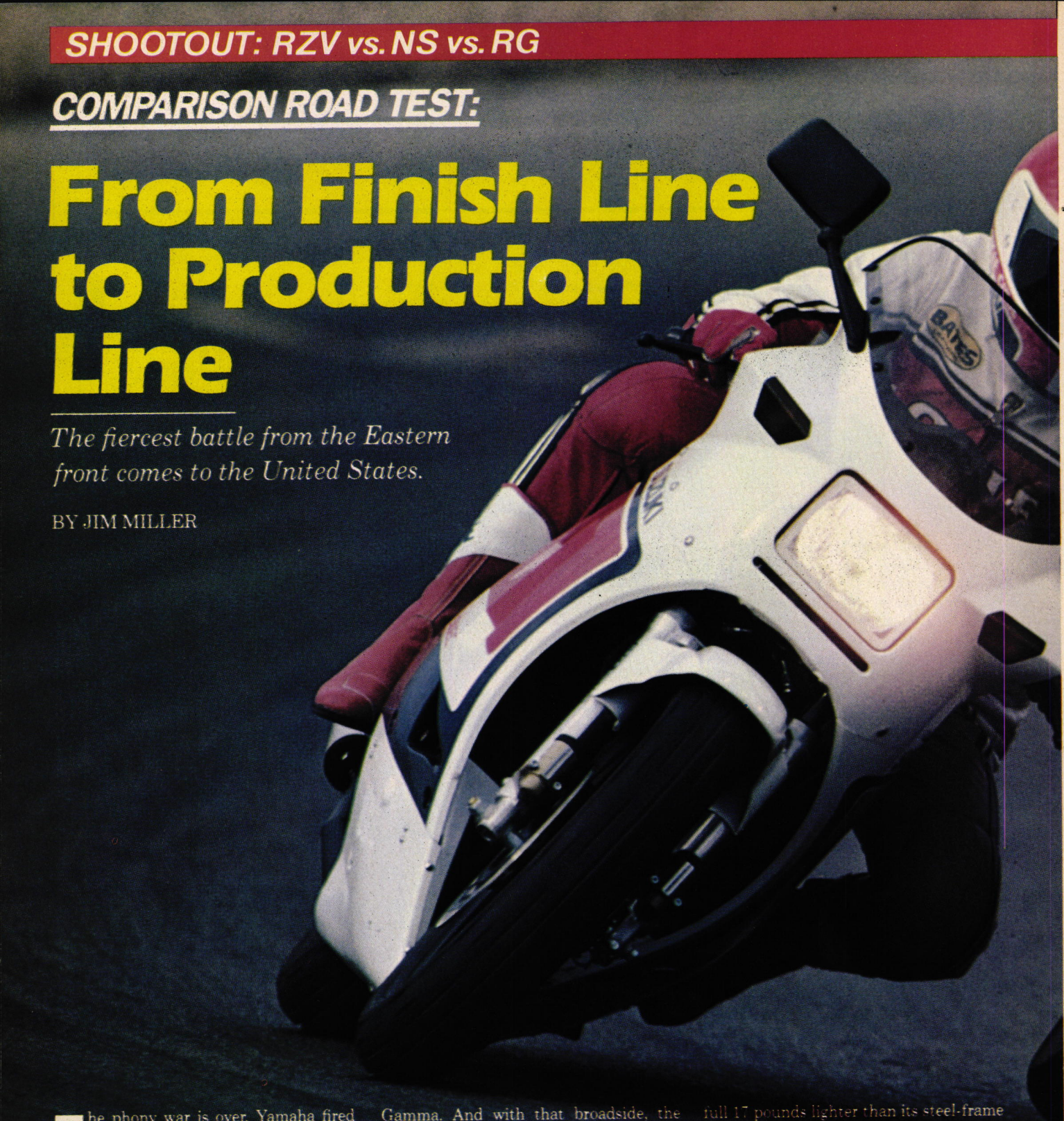
On Your Case: Case guards don't have to look like chromed basketball hoops sticking out from the sides of your bike, and a case in point is M/C Enterprises' Super Sport guards. Available for Honda, Kawasaki, Suzuki and Yamaha sportbikes, the Super Sport case guards feature a finned plastic insert on a flat steel plate that bolts over the end of the crankcase cover. In addition, the Super Sports are color-matched to the bike's frame. You can get a set from your motorcycle dealer for a suggested retail price of $44.95, or contact M/C Enterprises, Dept. CG, 2897 Palma Drive, Ventura, California 93001.

COMPARISON ROAD TEST:

From Finish Line to Production Line

The fiercest battle from the Eastern front comes to the United States.

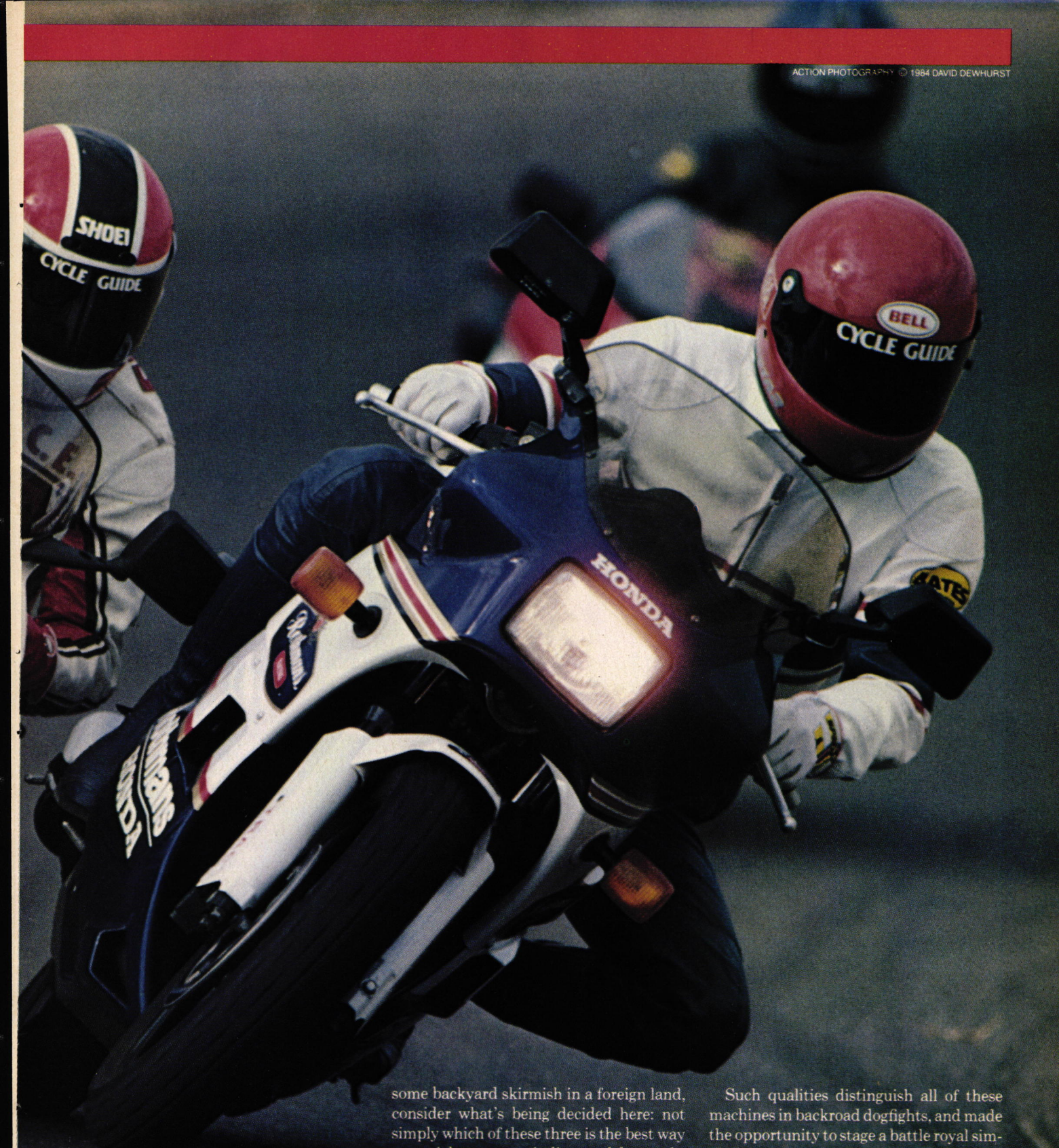
BY JIM MILLER



The phony war is over. Yamaha fired the first shots in 1984 with its RZ500 and RZV500R, a decisively placed salvo that bracketed the two-stroke GP-replica class. Yet, for more than a year after the smoke had cleared, what promised to become a full-fledged war seemed little more than a one-punch fight. Rumors flew about retaliation from the other manufacturers, but the battlefield remained silent, save for the rattling of sabres. Now Suzuki and Honda have returned fire with their own repliracers—Honda with its nimble NS400R and Suzuki with its potent RG500 Gamma. And with that broadside, the RZ500's dominance in the half-liter sporting theater is seriously threatened.

Challenging the Yamaha presents no small task, either. Introduced in 1984, the RZ quickly established itself as more than just a superlative middleweight; quite simply, on a twisty road the RZ500 could show its wheels to almost *any* motorcycle, regardless of displacement. When 20-mph corners linking triple-digit sweepers defined the field of battle, the RZ was nearly unapproachable—except, perhaps, by its aluminum-frame sibling, the RZV500R. A full 17 pounds lighter than its steel-frame stablemate, the RZV carries Yamaha's banner into this fray.

Honda's camp answers the call to battle with the NS400R, an aluminum-frame vee-three GP-replica complete even to its Rothmans decals. And although the Honda's displacement might make it seem the underdog here, the NS400R's svelte 392-pound weight and phenomenal handling help put it on near-equal footing in this toe-to-toe slugfest. Still, the NS must contend with the newest member of the guard, Suzuki's RG500 Gamma, and—on



paper, at least—the 374-pound square-four is the most formidable of the three. Delving deeper into the bike's specs will only convince you that, when it comes to GP heritage, the Gamma makes both the RZV and NS seem like bastard sons. Indeed, the RG500 comes to the firing line with barely enough time to dust itself off from the racetrack.

But before you write this contest off as some backyard skirmish in a foreign land, consider what's being decided here: not simply which of these three is the best way to straighten out a winding road, but nothing less than the all-time twisty-road champion. Because when the road begins to curve and coil, two-stroke sporting machinery writes the rules. And these motorcycles, the NS400R, RG500 and RZV500R, are the class of the class, bikes that combine light weight and sure-footed handling with a level of sheer power that makes engine displacement seem like a trivial, arbitrary classification.

Such qualities distinguish all of these machines in backroad dogfights, and made the opportunity to stage a battle royal simply too tempting to resist. So our overseas confederates have smuggled these bikes across the lines to Casablanca, and slipped them aboard a tramp steamer with their letters of transit. We're happy to report they arrived safe, sound—and ready for combat. And we've pitted them against one another in three theaters of operation: dragstrip, racetrack and twisty road. But the GP tradition continues in one important way—there's still only one winner.

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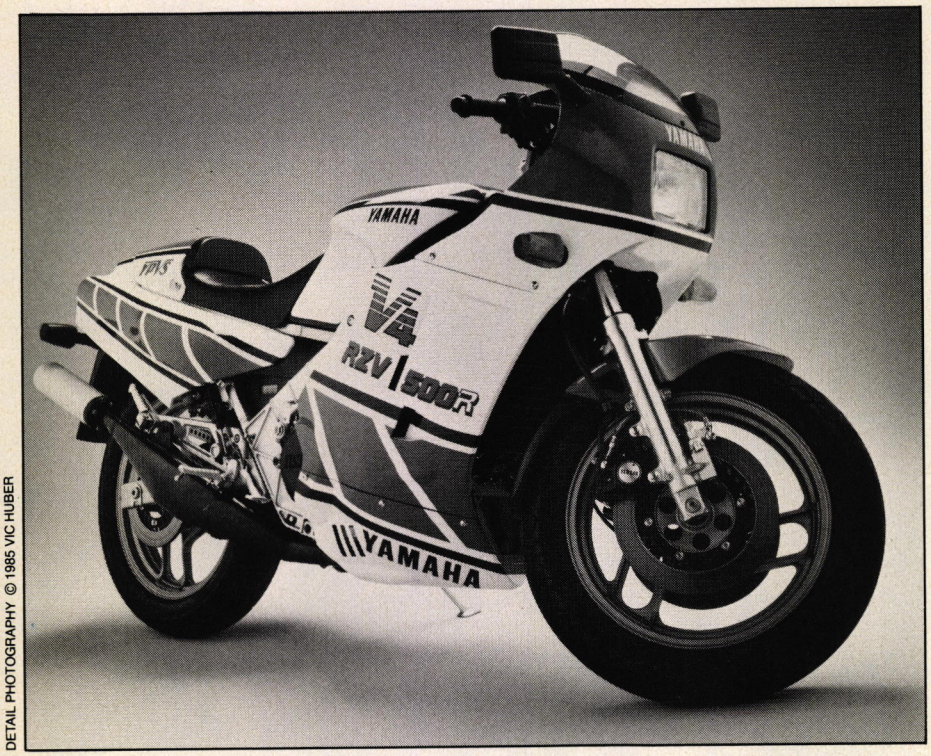


DETAIL PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 VIC HUBER

Yamaha RZV500R

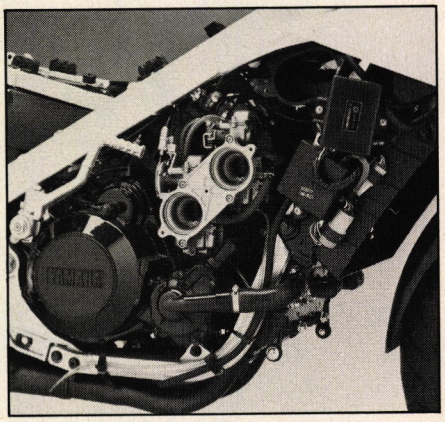
Eddie . . . they're here.

• Yamaha isn't alone in the repliracer market anymore. Indeed, the firm has some real competition on its hands now that Honda and Suzuki have released GP-racebike lookalikes. The newcomers' presence hasn't sent Yamaha's engineers scurrying back to their drawing boards, though; for 1985, they've worked little more than a few detail refinements on the Japanese-market-only RZV500. That's why the 1984 model we tested is representative of Yamaha's best efforts for this fresh-from-the-racetrack battle.

But the RZV sports a number of features not found on garden-variety European and Canadian RZ500s. And perhaps the most notable difference is the RZV's box-section aluminum frame, which helps trim the bike's weight by 17 pounds compared to the steel-frame RZ. Both frames share the same chassis geometry, though, with a 26.0 degree steering head angle, 95mm of trail and a 54-inch wheelbase. Plus, the V also uses the RZ's horizontally mounted, rebound damping-adjustable single rear shock and aluminum box-section swingarm. Yamaha did equip the V-bike with a higher-tech front fork, which offers four-way adjustable rebound damping and air-assist; the RZ's fork has no external adjustments.

In order to get the RZV's chassis, however, you have to take a slightly detuned version of the liquid-cooled 500cc two-stroke vee-four powerplant. RZVs come with smaller exhaust pipes and different jetting than is the case with export RZs, reducing power output from a claimed 88 horsepower to 63. Otherwise, the engines are identical, and share many design features—though no parts—with Kenny Roberts' 1983 OW70 works racebike. For instance, the RZ/RZV and OW70 engines use versions of Yamaha's Power Valve System to bolster low-end and midrange power, and they share a 50 degree vee-angle, too. Moreover, both motors employ two separate 180 degree crankshafts geared directly to the clutch. And further down the driveline, the RZ/RZV uses an OW-style side-loading six-speed gearbox that can be removed without splitting the cases.

Yet while the RZV's motor mirrors many of the racebike's specifications, Yamaha *has* groomed it for street use. For example, the streetbike's engine employs reed-valve induction for the rear cylinders and case-reeds for the front, whereas the racebike uses rotary valves. As a result, the RZV's 26mm slide/needle Mikuni carbs ride outboard of the cylinders rather than between them, as on Roberts' racer. And further down in the vee, there's a single counterbalancer to help quiet some of the two-stroke's buzziness.

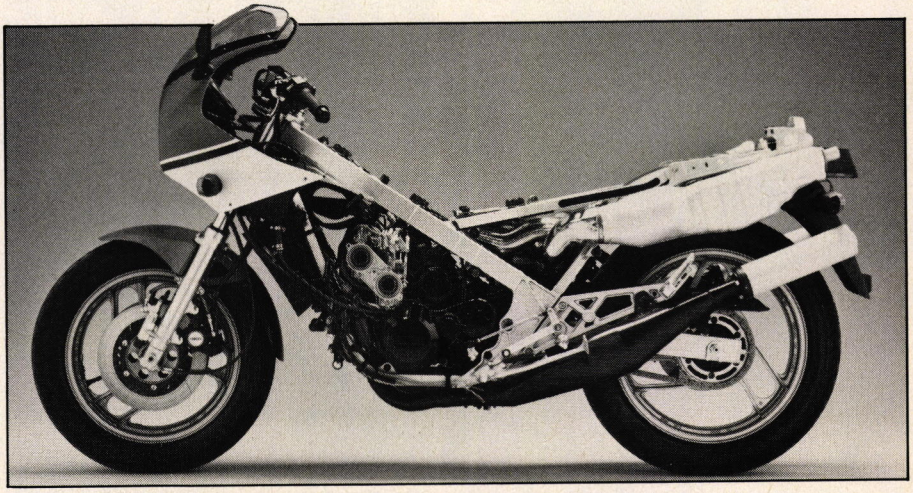


Carbs feed both case- and reed-valves

Two variations on the OW70 theme.

Even though Yamaha elected to use a counterbalancer to help tame the RZV for street duty, few other steps were taken that might dilute the bike's racebike-replica appeal. In fact, more so than its competitors, the RZV *feels* like a racebike, with a riding position that encourages aggressive attacks on canyon roads, and direct response from every control. Such touches fuel the bike's OW-replica image, and combine with the 500R's potent two-stroke engine and high-tech chassis to make a satisfyingly faithful street-going rendition of Yamaha's OW70 racebike. Those same credentials have been present in the RZV from its outset, and Yamaha figures they provide the RZV500R with the stamina it needs to whip up on the newcomers.

—Marc Cook



RZV shows off its aluminum frame and air- and damping-adjustable fork

Morsels of high-tech hardware for Japanese eyes only.

Honda NS400R

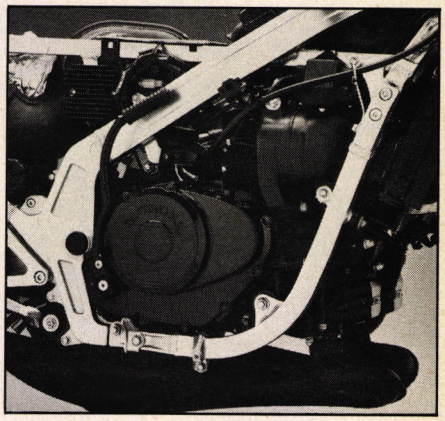
Even Freddie Spencer was an underdog—once.

• There's not a lot of common ground in this trio of two-stroke streakers, but the NS really stands out as "the only one" in a number of areas: It's the only one of this elite gathering with a three-cylinder engine; the only one with a single crankshaft; and, at 387cc, the NS is the only one that tapes in at substantially less than a half-liter. What qualifies it for membership in this group of racetrack refugees, however, is breeding: The NS400R can trace its roots to a world-championship winning racebike; in this case, Freddie Spencer's NS500 triple of 1983.

But the NS400R is a streetbike, and the world of two-way traffic imposes its own special requirements. So Honda wiped the slate clean and started over, designing a vee-three two-stroke sportbike that uses "the concept" behind the NS500 racer, but wraps that concept in all-new parts. As a result, while the street and track models share the same general layout of parts, many of their specifics are as different as a Rolls-Royce from a roller skate.

Those differences start with the engine, which comes to the street with a displacement of 387cc, down some 112cc from the NS500. Japan represents one of the NS400R's primary markets, so to avoid the tax and licensing penalties imposed on over-400cc motorcycles and their riders, Honda scaled the GP repliracer back to the 400 class. Besides being smaller than the race motor, the NS400's powerplant also uses a 90 degree vee-spread, as opposed to the racer's 110 degrees. In addition, the streetbike's engine has a two-down/one-up cylinder configuration, which eliminates some of the underseat exhaust plumbing that would result from using the racebike's one-down/two-up arrangement. Consequently, the 400 has room underneath the saddle for its battery and oil-injection tank, items that are mounted under the gas tank or in the fairing on the Suzuki and Yamaha.

Porting also differs significantly between the NS400R and its racing relation, with the 500's catacombs of five transfers and one intake port replaced by a simpler setup of four transfers and a single bridged intake port. Still, both motors breathe through reed-valve-controlled intakes, and both employ Honda's Auto-controlled Torque Amplification Chamber (ATAC) exhaust system, which is designed to increase low-end and midrange power by varying the exhaust-system volume according to rpm. Likewise, both machines use Nikasil-coated aluminum bores, rather than cast-in liners, and both are backed by six-speed gearboxes.

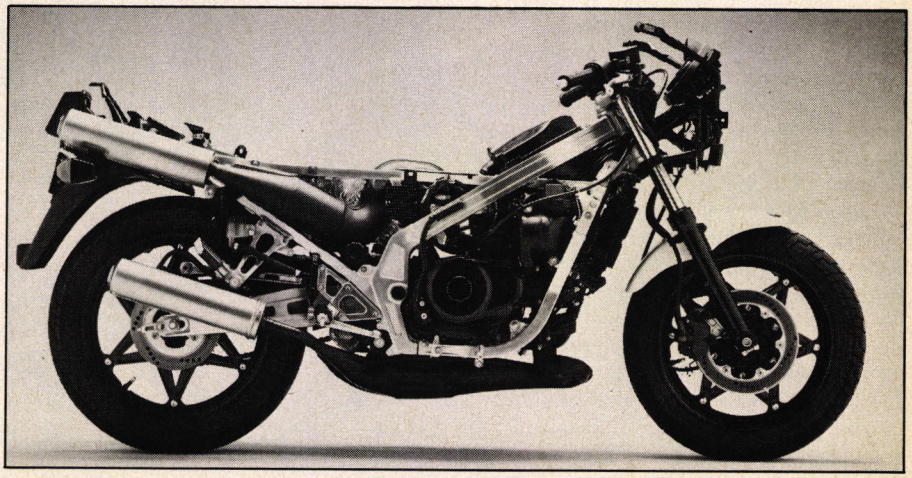


NS's ATAC-trained 387cc vee-three

Taking them on, a three against fours.

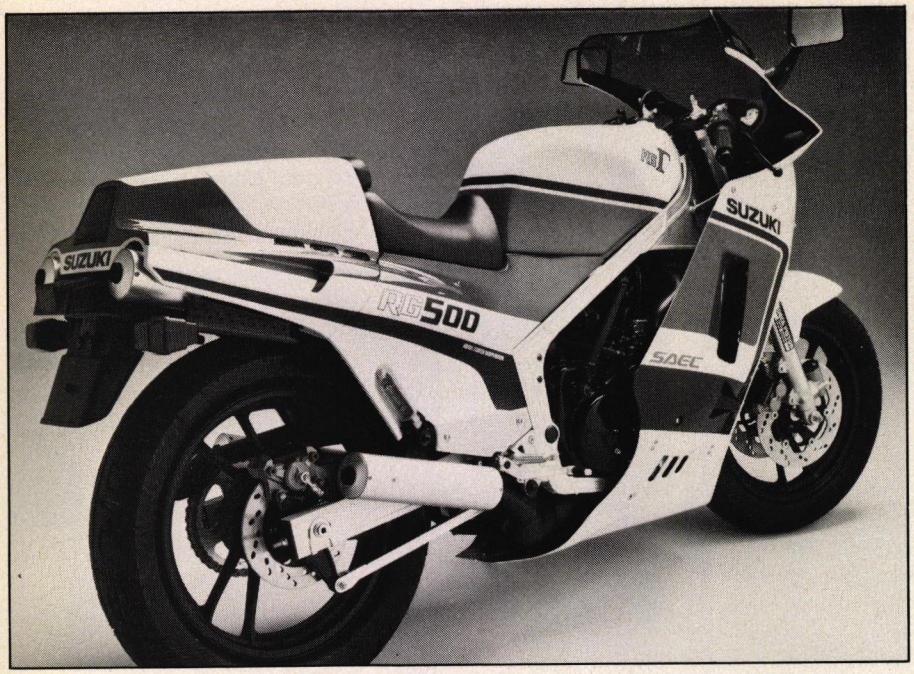
Similarities continue through the chassis of the two machines, as well. Not only do both the streetbike and racer feature a Pro-Link single-shock rear suspension and TRAC-controlled fork, but the frame connecting those items is aluminum. And while the aluminum frame provides a direct link from the NS500 to the NS400, it also separates the 400R from *any* street-legal Honda sold in this country. Plus, both the GP and street machines share wheel diameters, a 16-inch front paired with a 17-inch rear.

But the most important feature of Spencer's NS500—its ability to win—is what we're looking for in the NS400R. And that can't be judged from a specifications page, no matter how extensive or impressive. In this contest, though, even Fast Freddie can't help. Then again, the NS just might not *need* his help. —*Jim Miller*



TRAC-controlled fork and aluminum frame link 16-inch front, 17-inch rear wheels

Constructing a lightweight connection with the Grand Prix original.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 VIC HUBER

Suzuki RG500 Gamma

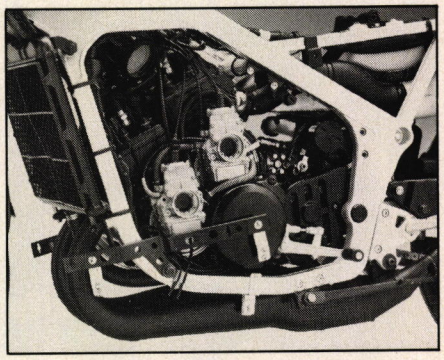
From Ryuyo to you.

• It's almost a given that whenever a streetbike lays claim to racebike heritage, something gets lost in the translation (like horsepower and handling) or added (like weight and complexity). Apparently, though, no one told Suzuki, because in this group of track-bred two-strokes, the RG500 Gamma stands out as the most faithful replica of its racing progenitor.

For example, the liquid-cooled 499cc square-four powerplant so closely resembles the racing RG's engine that you might think it was spirited away from Suzuki's Ryuyo test track and bolted into the road-going Gamma. In addition, the Gamma's rotary-valve induction and twin-crank design are instantly familiar to anyone who has followed Suzuki's GP racing fortunes. The engine does make some concessions to street use, however. First off, as a Japanese domestic-market streetbike, the Gamma pumps out a claimed 63 horsepower. And although both motors share bore and stroke dimensions (56.0mm x 50.6mm), the street engine's twin-ring pistons run in iron liners, while the racer uses single-ring pistons and Nikasil bores. Moreover, the Gamma has oil injection and a kickstarter, whereas the racer gets by on premix and push starts.

The repliracer's motor also has SAEC (Suzuki Automatic Exhaust Control), Suzuki's answer to Yamaha's YPVS and Honda's ATAC, and it incorporates elements of both. Below 7500 rpm, a Yamaha-style barrel valve in each cylinder's exhaust port exposes a subchamber in the cylinder head; the subchamber is plumbed into the exhaust port, and, as with the NS400R's ATAC, the added volume is meant to increase midrange power. SAEC also puts the bike on par with the latest racing RG in terms of technical sophistication, cementing the link between racebike and streetbike.

For the chassis, as well, Suzuki's engineers borrowed freely from the racebike's bag of tricks to create the Gamma. Both bikes feature aluminum frames built up of square tubing and cast sections, and both roll on 16-inch front and 17-inch rear wheels, as do most front-line GP contenders. And while the actual suspension components differ from those found on the racebike, they're designed to deliver the same state-of-the-art handling. The front fork combines air *and* spring preload adjustments with Suzuki's PDF anti-dive feature, while the Full Floater rear suspension—similar to designs found on other single-shock Suzuki streetbikes—offers hydraulic preload adjustment only. Suzuki meant for the Gamma to stop as well as it handles, too, and to that end equipped the bike with a dual-disc front brake with four-piston calipers and a twin-piston-caliper brake in the rear.



Gamma shares SAEC with racing RG

GP technology for backroad supremacy.

Such credentials virtually guarantee the pole position for Suzuki's Gamma in Backroad GPs. And because the Gamma is the most literal translation of racebike to streetbike yet, it should take on the challenge of the canyons like a duck takes to water. With a racing heritage drawn from a motorcycle with four world championships to its credit, the RG500 GP racer, the Suzuki has all the right stuff to go up against its toughest rivals—Honda and Yamaha—on or off the track. *—Jerry Smith*

Unclothed, Suzuki's RG reveals the bare facts of its Grand Prix bloodline

There's no way to cover up the connection between racebike and streetbike.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

SHOOTOUT OF THE YEAR:

The Final Conflict

You big guys line up, and you little guys bunch up.

BY JIM MILLER

Forget Japanese origins for these three; this conflict started in Europe, where for the past seven years, Suzuki, Yamaha and Honda have traded 500 GP championships like 10-year-olds with baseball cards. But the experience the race teams gained hasn't been confined solely to the European theater; it's spilled over to the streets in the Japanese home market. From there, we've brought it to America, courtesy of Exotic Motorcycle Imports [(213) 824-7160] for one single purpose: to find out which of the three manufacturers learned its lessons best. There's only one way to accomplish that goal; to run these three overachievers nose-to-nose on the dragstrip, racetrack and backroads, and push all of them to their limits until two of them blink.

The dragstrip gave us the first indication as to just how high those limits are, too, as Suzuki's RG500 Gamma pulled down top honors with an astonishing 11.991-second, 113.20-mph run—more than 0.13 second quicker and 4 mph faster than Kawasaki's Ninja 600R, the current U.S. middleweight bullet. Honda's NS400 produced our next surprise, taking second with a scorching 12.324/108.69 run. And even though the Yamaha RZV500R's 12.409/107.52 quarter-mile trails the other two, it's still a remarkable performance for a half-liter sportbike.

What those numbers don't show, however, is the radically different ways these bikes accelerate. Both the NS400R and RZV500R conform to the traditional, high-revving two-stroke mold, with most of their power packed in between 7000 rpm and redline. Still, the Yamaha's displacement advantage shows up in the low-end and midrange, and the vee-four's power builds fairly evenly, while the vee-three Honda robs its mid- and low-rpm ranges for a top-end wallop. The Gamma uses a different tack altogether, however, with much of its punch concentrated low in the rev range, and its best power coming between 6000 and 8500 rpm. The RG did, however, suffer from an apparently over-rich oil-metering setting, which prevented it from consistently pulling high rpm in its upper gears; while the problem prevented us from getting a representative top speed on the bike, it couldn't blunt the square-four's lunge.

It also couldn't dull the Gamma's edge

in everyday use—especially over the Honda. Although the NS takes off like a Sidewinder missile once it hits 7000 rpm, when it drops *below* that speed, the NS rider can only watch as the RZV and RG clear off into the middle distance. In fact, both the Gamma and the RZV leave the vee-three blubbering in their wake in 60-mph roll-ons in fifth or sixth gears. And between the two fours, the Gamma leaves the RZV for dead in either fifth or sixth; only when the square-four runs out of breath at 8500 rpm does the RZV have the advantage—one that ends the instant the Gamma pilot upshifts.

But it's when the road starts twisting like a soap-opera plot that these GP refugees can *really* strut their stuff, and on a twisting road nothing else on two wheels comes close. Still, in this rarified company the Yamaha falls behind the Honda and Suzuki, because its comparatively slow, high-effort steering forces its rider to peel off earlier when entering corners. Granted, the RZV repays its rider with exceptional high-speed stability, but herding the bike through curves requires deliberate line selection and a firm hand, especially during quick transitions. And that's exactly where the NS400R shines brightest; its near-effortless steering makes whipping the 392-pound Honda through corners seem like a fingertip exercise compared to the RZV. Moreover, the Honda's hummingbird-quick responsiveness, precise steering and sticky tires enable its rider to lengthen any straightaway, simply by letting him snap into corners at the last instant.

But while that split-second turning ability allows the NS to put the moves on the RZV, the same trick doesn't work quite so neatly against the Gamma. Almost as responsive as the 400, the Suzuki's agility and its tires' tenacious grip permit the RG rider to choose nearly the same entry point as the Honda when entering a corner, then use the RG's potent horsepower advantage to launch the featherweight, 374-pound square-four past the NS on the exit. Granted, the RZ rider can attempt the same feat, but the vee-four's wailing midrange edge— dulled by its mediocre tires—can't propel the 422-pound Yamaha past the NS—or the RG.

The RZV certainly won't make up any yardage trying to outbrake the other two, because *all* of these bikes can stop hard enough to buckle your elbows. And even though all three bikes' brake systems provide outstanding feedback, each one feels distinctly different. The Yamaha's front brake, for example, initially is slightly grabby, yet requires a firm pull at the lever to get maximum stopping power. Honda's NS has the quintessen-

tial two-finger brake, though its light effort is combined with a fairly long lever pull. And the Gamma's brake arguably is the most progressive of the three; even at the limit the RG lets the rider know *exactly* what's going on where the rubber meets the road.

Oddly enough, the differences between these three become more sharply defined as the speeds approach triple digits, but as the road opens up their advantages become less clear. Through high-speed sweepers the RZV's Gibraltar-like stability allows it to close the gap on the other two repliracers. And the NS's quick steering becomes less of an advantage through long, sweeping turns or straightaways, although its stability edges out the Gamma's and approaches the RZV's. High speeds also point out the RG's sensitivity to suspension adjustment—both it and the NS work best with their suspensions set on the low side, and the RG500 becomes downright twitchy with too much preload or air pressure in the fork. For a 150-pound rider, the Suzuki works best with 0 psi and 5mm preload in the fork and seven turns on the shock's hydraulic preload adjuster. Under the same conditions, the NS handles best with 2 psi in the fork and three turns of preload at the rear. Of the three, only the Yamaha sports any external rebound-damping adjustments, and the RZV prefers having them dialed up to the high end, with 5 psi in the fork and

Never before has the connection between finish line and production line been as clear and direct.

damping set to No.3 (of four), and the rear set to 2½ (of seven) on damping and No.3 (of five) for spring preload.

With those settings, the RZV500R fairly flew around Willow Springs Raceway, where we took them to see how much of their racetrack breeding showed through. Far from crowning a winner, though—or even indicating the ultimate racetrack handler—the Willow Springs laboratory primarily served to point out the different approaches Suzuki, Yamaha and Honda used in designing their GP replicas. In fact, no single bike consistently posted the fastest lap times. When it came to fast laps, rider preference played a much larger role than a machine's abilities or limitations—even the NS, despite its displacement handicap, matched the other two lap for lap. What the racetrack did show, though, was that each one of these bikes lives up to its checkered-flag ancestry; all three took to the course like crows to a cornfield.

Each bike does, however, have its own unique recipe for going fast: The NS's quick steering combines with limitless cornering clearance to give it the advantage through corners, where it makes up for time lost on the faster parts of the track. And the RZV's broad powerband and unwavering stability compensate for its slow steering, slippery tires and comparative lack of cornering clearance. Faster than the NS and more nimble than the RZV, the Gamma combined exactly the attributes needed to capitalize on the others' weaknesses and to stay within striking distance of the other two bikes.

The racetrack also pointed out that when it comes to kinethetics, the RZV's rowdy vee-four and dead-stable chassis make the bike feel like it just rolled out of a GP paddock. Yet many of those same authentic responses detract from the Yamaha's appeal on the street. Even with the suspension adjusted to its lowest settings—front and rear rebound damping on No.1, no preload on the rear spring and 0 psi in the fork—the bike delivers a firm ride, and the low settings for the fork can't compensate for its high stiction and poor response to minor paving irregularities. Plus, not only do both the NS and RG stand head and shoulders over the RZV in terms of suspension response, but their softer spring and damping rates provide a much more compliant ride.

Moreover, the RZV500R's motor is the least civilized of the three, its horsepower output accompanied by a high level of intake whoop and gear noise. Further, as the Yamaha's tach needle sweeps toward 6000

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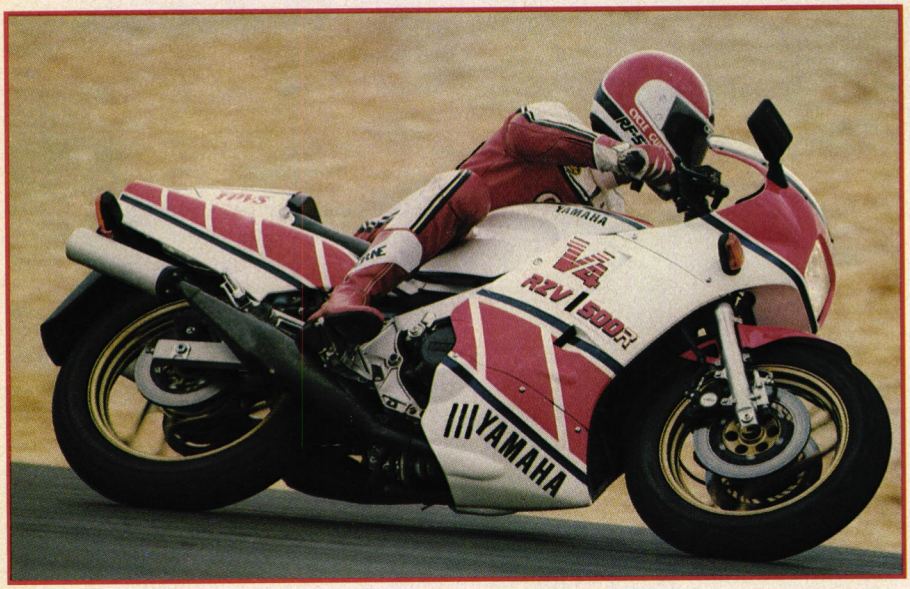
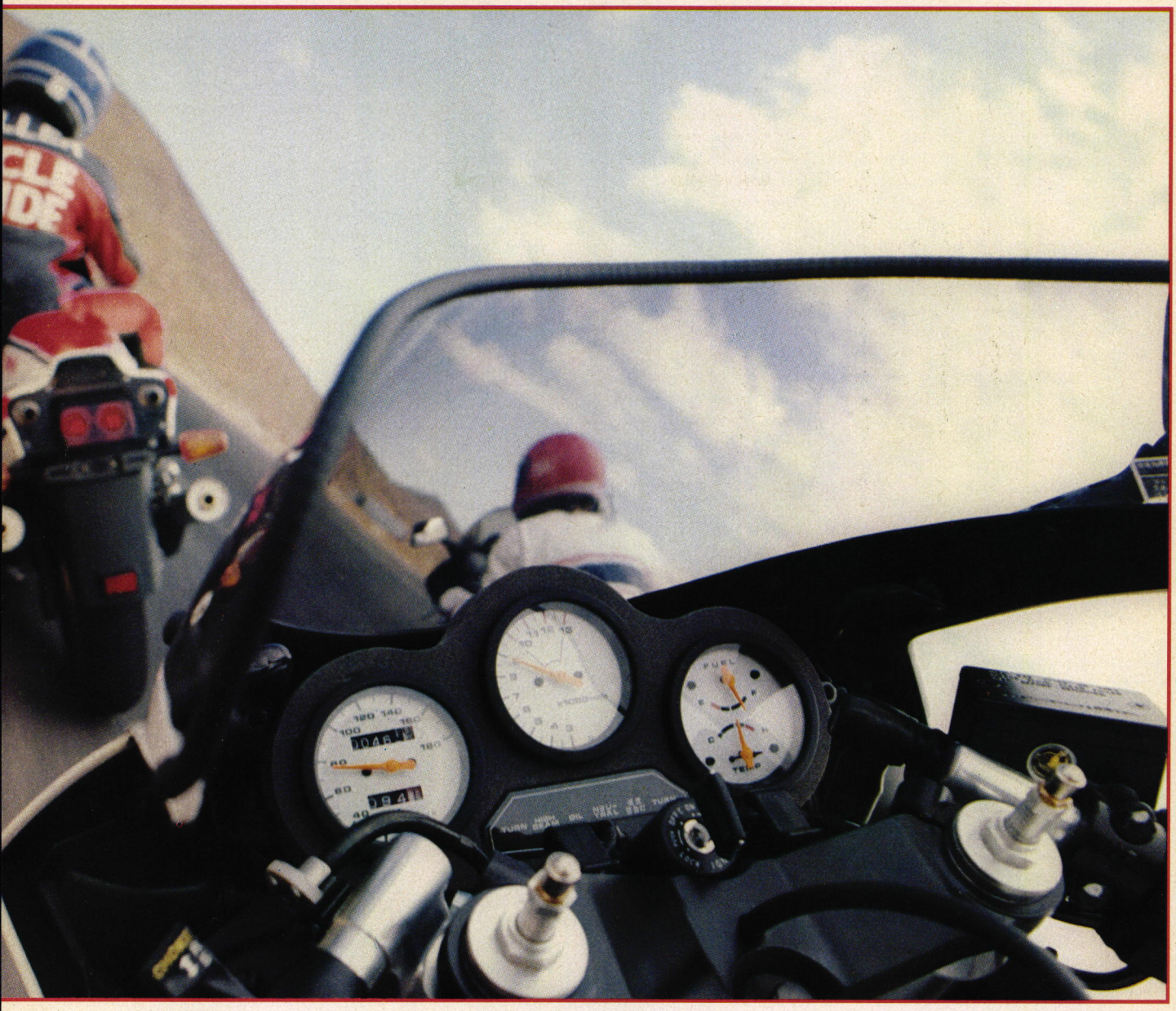


RG500, NS400R and RZV500R show their world-championship breeding at every turn

Just think of Uncini, Spencer and Roberts as design consultants.

rpm, the bike fairly comes alive with vibration: Footpegs, seat, tank and grips all buzz like an orbital sander on 220 volts. The RZV does smooth out below 5000 rpm, but it's not nearly as accommodating as the Gamma or NS400R, both of which isolate the rider well from the whooping and gnashing of teeth. Likewise, the RZV can't keep from roasting its rider; the two underseat pipes radiate sufficient heat in low-speed traffic to make the bike feel like a two-wheel space heater. Engine heat is one area in which the NS also comes up short; only the Gamma keeps its rider well insulated, and even the RG is marginal in hot weather.

Still, any one of these makes a reasonably good streetbike, at least for short hops. None takes more than one or two kicks to start from cold, and all three warm up quickly. In addition, their responsive engines and light weight make



them seem more like pit bikes than racebikes when you're breezing through traffic. Moreover, the riding positions provide reasonable short-term comfort, though the RZV is marred by an awkwardly tight footpeg-to-seat length, and the NS, while comfortable for smaller riders, is a bit cramped for those over 6 feet. Once again, the Gamma strikes the best balance. It's physically the largest of these three, and its full-size dimensions are complemented by a near-ideal seat/handlebar/footpeg relationship.

But riding these bikes in town is like going to dinner with a hooker; it's pleasant enough, but it isn't really why you get together. These are front-line sportbikes—first and foremost—and their abilities as backroad weapons are what's at issue here. And that's why the RZV500R places last in this group. Although the Yamaha offers some of the most thrilling racebike kinesthetics ever to hit the street—and backs them up with an astounding level of performance—when it comes to living up to the standards of this class, the RZV's heavy steering and sluggish reflexes place it behind the other two repliracers. The NS400R, on the other hand, has no problem coming through as the quickest handling of the bunch; in fact, its jewellike chassis and exhilarating acceleration almost make up for its shortage of low-end and midrange power. But in the end, the NS comes up 100cc short. Some might consider that unfair, but the fact that the vee-three places second in this elite trio is ample justification for its being here, and places it ahead of any other sportbike in production—except one: the RG500 Gamma.

On twisty canyon roads, these two-strokes write the rules; they can humble bikes twice their size.

That not only makes the Suzuki the best sportbike you *can't* buy in this country, it makes it the best production sportbike available *anywhere.* More important, though, is the reason the Gamma wins—not by process of elimination, but because with its featherweight heft, 750-class engine performance and nimble handling, the Suzuki delivers on every promise the GP-replica class makes. And the RG's victory here makes one fact perfectly clear: That racing *does* improve the breed. It's just that, in the Gamma's case, the route from finish line to production line has never been shorter. •

Ride Review

• It was a dirty, thankless job, but someone had to do it. Someone had to take the three best two-stroke sportbikes in the world and find out which one was the *crème de la crème*. So Cook, Miller and I steeled ourselves to spend an entire day mercilessly flogging the NS, the Gamma and the RZV along canyon roads and switchbacks so serpentine that I swear I almost caught and passed myself in one never-ending third-gear sweeper.

We strafed apexes, we outbraked one another, we played fender tag until our tongues—and the bikes'—were hanging out. I liked each bike for different reasons, but not any one of them better than the other . . . at least not until the day wore on, and I wore out. Near the end, when my wrists were cramping up and my concentration tank was on reserve, for me only one bike was still as fast, fun and forgiving as it had been that morning.

And when it was all over, and the blue smoke had cleared, I peeled off my sweat-stained gloves and tipped my helmet to Suzuki's Gamma. It showed me how really good a sportbike can be, and in the process ensured that I'll never be satisfied with anything less from now on.

—Jerry Smith

• Jerry Smith and I looked at each other in amazement. During a break in the street testing for this comparison, Miller jumped from Suzuki's Gamma, and with God-in-heaven conviction trembling in his voice, said, "This is it, the Suzuki wins. No contest." Now, Smith and I had just exchanged verbal blows defending the Yamaha and Honda, respectively, and we were looking to Miller for a stalemate-breaking vote. We threatened to tie him down and beat the *right* answer out of him.

Miller escaped without bruises, largely because each successive run had Smith and me changing our minds almost as often as we swapped bikes. And that's because these bikes are so remarkably competent that their pecking order is determined quite a bit by nitpicking and personal preference. But in every comparison, there *must* be a winner; so set the table, Mother, because I'm in the mood for crow. Despite what I said last month, I prefer the Honda. The NS's agility and high-strung powerband seem closely tuned to my own rhythm, and work with me, not against me. That's not to say I'd kick a Yamaha FZ750 out of my garage, though; I'll just have to make room for an NS400R next to it.

—Marc Cook

• Life was less complicated last year, when there was only one GP-bred sportbike to lust for: Yamaha's RZ500. But as quickly as you could say "Eddie Lawson," two more repliracers appeared—Honda's NS400R and Suzuki's RG500—to confuse the issue. Now, nobody said the task of selecting the best of this trio would be easy, but it turned out to be almost impossble. It didn't help that all three performed well at Willow Springs, a place that usually culls the pretenders.

So I took the issue to the streets, and found a winner—Suzuki's RG500. Because without a stopwatch to tell the story, the Gamma made me *feel* like I was on a Grand Prix roadracer, more so than either the RZ500 or NS400. And—to me—feeling like a GP star, rather than going fast like one, is really what these bikes are all about.

Besides, apart from its GP-racebike trappings, the RG500 also offers the best-balanced package of the trio. True, the RZ's engine jumps to redline with the explosive violence of a GP bike's, and the NS has the superior chassis, but when it comes to lacing turns together, the RG just *feels* better. So it's simple; I'll take the Gamma.

—Dain Gingerelli

• Very well, I'll confess. I've been unfaithful—to my own motorcycle. In my garage there's a 10-year-old Honda CB400F, and for a decade now, it's been the apple of my eye, the object of my affection. I've owned other motorcycles, and I've even had brief flings with every shiny, new bike that's waltzed into the magazine's garage, taking them for long romps down winding roads. Yet even though I know it's old, nothing else could take my 400's place in my heart. Up until now, I've been faithful.

Not any more, though; not since I made the acquaintance of Honda's NS400R. It drew me in after the very first corner, with its urgent powerband, responsive handling and impeccable road manners. Never has there been such an irresistable invitation to go for a ride; never have I made such transparent excuses to accept the invitation. Not that Yamaha's RZV500R and Suzuki's RG500 aren't enticing in their own right. They are; they just don't speak to me as directly as the NS.

Alas, though, it is not to be. The NS's visa expired, and Honda won't let us see each other again. I am desolate, and my 400 is safe for now. But I'll remember the time the NS and I spent together.

—Charles Everitt

CYCLE GUIDE

MANUFACTURER

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE

ENGINE
Type
Port arrangement
Bore and stroke
Displacement
Compression ratio (corrected)
Engine redline
Carburetion
Air filter
Lubrication
Starting system
Ignition
Charging system

DRIVETRAIN
Primary drive
Clutch
Final drive
Gear — I, II, III, IV, V, VI

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL
Front
Rear

BRAKES
Front
Rear

TIRES
Front
Rear

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES
Weight
Weight distribution
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank)
Wheelbase
Seat height
Handlebar width
Footpeg height
Ground clearance
Steering head angle
Front wheel trail
Frame
Oil capacity
Fuel tank
Instrumentation

PERFORMANCE
Fuel consumption range
Average fuel consumption
Cruising range, maximum
Cruising range, reserve only
Speedometer error, 50 kph indicated
Speedometer error, 100 kph indicated
Best 1/4-mile acceleration
Top speed (observed)
Stopping distance from 30 mph
Stopping distance from 60 mph

WARRANTY

AVAILABLE COLORS

SPECIFICATIONS

Honda NS400R	Suzuki RG500 Gamma	Yamaha RZV500R
Honda Motor Co. Ltd., 28-8, 6-chome Jingu-mae, Shibuya-ku, 150 Japan	Suzuki Motor Co. Ltd., 300 Takatsuka, Hamamatsu, Japan	Yamaha Motor Co., 2500 Shingai Iwata-Shi, Shizuoka-ken, 438 Japan
¥629,000 ($2620)	¥759,000 ($3161)	¥825,000 ($3436)
liquid-cooled two-stroke 90 degree vee-three one bridged, reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one exhaust per cylinder	liquid-cooled two-stroke square-four one rotary-valve controlled intake, six transfers, one exhaust per cylinder	liquid-cooled two-stroke 50 degree tandem vee-four Front cylinders: one crankcase-reed-valve-controlled intake, five transfers, one exhaust Rear cylinders: one reed-valve-controlled intake, four transfers, one exhaust
57.0mm x 50.6mm	56.0mm x 50.6mm	56.4mm x 50.0mm
387.4cc	498.5cc	499.7cc
6.7:1	7.0:1	6.6:1
10,750 rpm	10,000 rpm	10,000 rpm
three 26mm Keihin rectangular slide/needle	four 28mm Mikuni rectangular slide/needle	four 26mm Mikuni slide/needle
washable oiled foam element	washable oiled foam element	washable oiled foam element
oil injection	oil injection	oil injection
primary kick	kick	primary kick
transistorized breakerless	transistorized breakerless	transistorized breakerless
12-volt; 160-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 4-ampere-hour battery	12-volt; 196-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 4-ampere-hour battery	12-volt; 196-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 5.5-ampere-hour battery
straight-cut gears; 2.428:1 ratio wet, multi-plate #530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.500:1 (40/16) ratio	helical gears; 2.231:1 ratio wet, multi-plate #530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.500:1 (40/16) ratio	straight-cut gears; 2.226:1 ratio wet, multi-plate #530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.533:1 (38/15) ratio
Internal gear ratio / overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM	Internal gear ratio / overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM	Internal gear ratio / overall gear ratio / MPH per 1000 RPM
2.500 / 15.506 / 4.65	2.636 / 14.702 / 5.06	2.400 / 13.532 / 5.64
1.714 / 10.631 / 6.78	1.750 / 9.761 / 7.62	1.684 / 9.495 / 8.03
1.333 / 8.268 / 8.72	1.381 / 7.703 / 9.66	1.364 / 7.691 / 9.92
1.111 / 6.891 / 10.46	1.174 / 6.548 / 11.36	1.167 / 6.580 / 11.59
0.965 / 5.985 / 12.05	1.045 / 5.828 / 12.77	1.043 / 5.881 / 12.97
0.866 / 5.371 / 13.42	0.957 / 5.338 / 13.94	0.958 / 5.402 / 14.12
Showa air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter/4.5 in. (114mm) single Showa shock, 10mm spring preload range within 13¼ turns of adjuster/4.2 in. (106mm)	Kayaba air-spring, 38mm stanchion tube diameter, 4-position adjustable hydraulic anti-dive, 21mm spring preload range/3.9 in. (98mm) single Kayaba shock, 10mm spring preload range within 18 turns of adjuster/5.0 in. (128mm)	Kayaba air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, brake-actuated hydraulic anti-dive/4.9 in. (125mm) single Yamaha shock, 7-position adjustable rebound damping, 9mm spring preload range/5.0 128mm)
dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 9.7-in. (247mm) effective disc diameter single-action hydraulic caliper, 8.5-in. (215mm) effective disc diameter	dual double-action hydraulic calipers, 10.2-in. (259mm) effective disc diameter double-action hydraulic caliper, 8.2-in. (208mm) effective disc diameter	dual double-action hydraulic calipers, 10.4-in. (264mm) effective disc diameter double-action hydraulic caliper, 9.6-in. (243mm) effective disc diameter
100/90V16 Dunlop K625A tubeless 110/90V17 Dunlop K625 tubeless	110/90-16 59H Dunlop Arrowmax tubeless 120/90-17 64H Dunlop Arrowmax tubeless	120/80-16 60H Dunlop K125 tubeless 130/80-18 66H Dunlop K225 tubeless
392 lbs. (177.8kg)	374 lbs. (169.6kg)	422 lbs. (191.4kg)
48.2% front, 51.8% rear	47.9% front, 52.1% rear	47.4% front, 52.6% rear
800 lbs. (363kg)	772 lbs. (350kg)	N/A
376 lbs. (170kg)	361 lbs. (164kg)	N/A
53.9 to 55.4 in. (1370 to 1407mm)	55.9 to 56.8 in. (1420 to 1442mm)	53.7 to 54.8 in. (1364 to 1392mm)
30.7 in. (780mm)	30.8 in. (783mm)	30.4 in. (771mm)
25.4 in. (645mm)	23.8 in. (605mm)	24.4 in. (620mm)
13.9 in. (352mm)	14.0 in. (356mm)	14.0 in. (356mm)
5.1 in. (130mm), at expansion chamber	4.1 in. (105mm) at lower cowling	5.2 in. (133mm), at lower cowling
27.1 degrees from vertical	23.6 degrees from vertical	26.0 degrees from vertical
3.94 in. (100mm)	4.01 in. (102mm)	3.74 in. (95mm)
box-section and tubular aluminum, double front downtubes	box-section and cast aluminum, double front downtubes	box-section aluminum and tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
1.9 qt. (1.8/)	0.7 qt. (0.7/)	2.1 qt. (2.0/)
steel, 5.1 gal. (19.2/), including 1.3 gal. (4.9/) reserve	steel, 5.8 gal. (21.8/), including 1.3 gal. (5.0/) reserve	steel, 6.1 gal. (23.0/), including 1.2 gal. (4.5/) reserve
speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge, fuel gauge	speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge/fuel gauge
25 to 45 mpg (11 to 19 km/l)	22 to 42 mpg (9 to 18 km/l)	25 to 53 mpg (11 to 23 km/l)
32 mpg (14 km/l)	30 mpg (13 km/l)	33 mpg (14 km/l)
128 to 230 miles (205 to 369km)	128 to 244 miles (206 to 392km)	153 to 323 miles (245 to 520km)
33 to 59 miles (52 to 94km)	29 to 55 miles (46 to 88km)	30 to 64 miles (48 to 102km)
45 kph actual	48 kph actual	47 kph actual
90 kph actual	97 kph actual	92 kph actual
12.324 sec., 108.69 mph (175 kph)	11.991 sec., 113.20 mph (182 kph)	12.409 sec., 107.52 mph (173 kph)
125 mph (201 kph)	(see text)	134 mph (216 kph)
35 ft. (10.7m)	32 ft. (9.8m)	34 ft. (10.4m)
135 ft. (41.1m)	134 ft. (40.8m)	147 ft. (44.8m)
N/A	N/A	N/A
red-white-blue-and-yellow, red-white-blue-and-gold	blue-white-and-black, red-white-and-black	red-white-and-blue only

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BY LARRY WORKS

COMING SOON

• For years, most of us have ogled, stared at, desired and admired Bimotas. The Bimota—*any* Bimota—is, according to the cognoscenti, the quintessential Italian motorcycle. Oddly enough, however, with all the myriad Japanese engines Bimota frames have cradled, there's never been an all-Italian Bimota. Until now; it's the DB1, the first model in a series of Ducati/Bimotas. A five-speed, 748cc Ducati vee-twin powers this exotic Italian hybrid, with a 9.3:1 compression ratio and a claim of 70 horsepower. But, Ducatiphiles notwithstanding, it's what's *outside* the engine that's of note here.

Underneath the DB1's bodywork lies a frame built in two separate modules. The front half is constructed of 25 straight chromoly steel tubes, machined to exactly matched outside diameters before they're welded, and in the rear a combination of stainless steel and aluminum rectangular-section tubing supports the saddle and footpegs. Together, the two frame sections weigh less than 12 pounds. Weight, in fact, was a prime consideration in the DB1's design, and led to Bimota's decision to forgo sheet steel—or any metal—in building the fuel tank. Instead, the 5.8-gallon tank is molded of "reticulated polyethylene." The end result of that choice— and a host of others—is a three-quarter-liter sportbike with a claimed dry weight of only 353 pounds.

Light weight wasn't the DB1's only design parameter, though. Aside from being light—and all-Italian—the bike had to live up to the Bimota mystique of performance through high-tech hardware. To that end, this new machine uses a single, remotely adjustable, aluminum-body Marzocchi shock bolted to the chromoly box-section swingarm; the engine serves as the swingarm pivot. The fork, also a Marzocchi item, has 41.7mm-diameter stanchion tubes and mechanical anti-dive. The list of Italian pieces continues, with Brembo disc brakes; Bimota's own 16-inch wheels, front and rear; Veglia instruments; and, as you might expect, Pirelli tires.

Bimota's DB1 genuinely deserves the "Coming Soon" label, too, because the first of them should hit U.S. shores just about the time you read this. And just to add a touch of piquancy to an already tasty item, a limited-production racing version is said to be coming soon as well.

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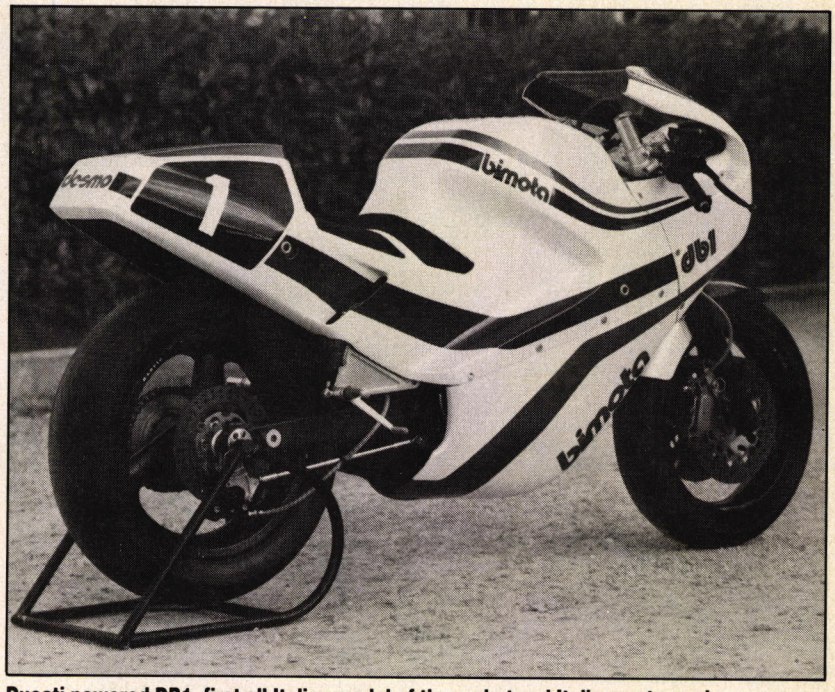
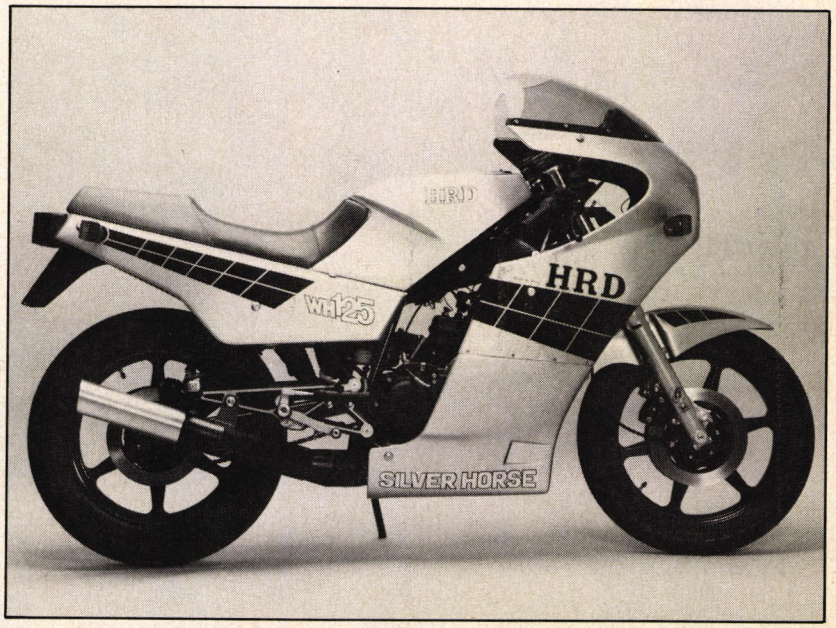


Ducati-powered DB1, first all-Italian model of the archetypal Italian motorcycle

Beginning a new technological era for Bimota.



Six-speed HRD Silver Horse flies the Italian colors on a slightly smaller scale

Red, white and green in basic silver.

• Somewhat smaller, though no less Italian, is HRD's latest Silver Horse. The model debuted at the last Milan Show, and has been steadily refined since then. This single-shock, liquid-cooled 125 now has an anti-dive fork, and triple Brembo disc brakes. The six-speed two-stroke motor has a revised exhaust system, and produces a claimed 26 horsepower—enough to propel the 234-pound Silver Horse to a top speed of just under 90 mph. Hi-ho, Silver.

FEDERAL CASES

• Call this one making a federal case about nothing more than a bit of vapor. Cagiva, the world's fifth-largest motorcycle manufacturer, has been effectively restricted from selling its new 650 Alazzura in California. The bike reportedly was emissions-certified by the EPA, but was limited to 49-state status because it lacked certification by the California Air Resources Board. The problem wasn't that the 650 couldn't be fitted with the charcoal canister necessary for it to pass California's stringent vapor-recovery specifications; rather, California regulations state that the v-r test must be performed in the same lab and simultaneously with an emissions test. The Catch-22 was that CARB's emissions test equipment was inoperative. As a result, the 650 Alazzura got strangled with red tape—and kept out of the lucrative California marketplace. Cagiva has found a pair of scissors big enough to cut this particular red ribbon, however. The firm is building an emissions/vapor-recovery test facility in Italy in cooperation with Dell'Orto, and soon will be able to certify all its four-strokes for California sale prior to shipping them to the United States.

• If you own a Yamaha FJ1100, '84 or '85, make your next trip a short one. In fact, take the bike to a Yamaha dealer to have it brought up to spec. A worldwide recall on the Yamaha FJ1100 has been issued to correct a problem with the rear brake. Under continued full compression of the rear suspension, a fastener that holds the rear brake line to the swingarm can puncture the hose, causing a loss of brake fluid. Yamaha dealers will provide the fix, in the form a differently shaped hose designed to prevent contact with the swingarm.

HARD CASH

• Two months ago, we reported on the rebirth of Triumph under the control of British millionaire-industrialist John Bloor. The report included information that Bloor's company would concentrate on the liquid-cooled 900 Phoenix, and had leased manufacturing rights to the 750cc vertical twin Bonneville to another firm. In a fascinating case of moto-legerdemain, the other firm, L.F. Harris Ltd., brought its Triumph to market while the motorcycle world focused its attention on Bloor. The L.F. Harris in question is Les Harris, also owner of Racing Spares, who has poured an estimated $2 million of his own money into

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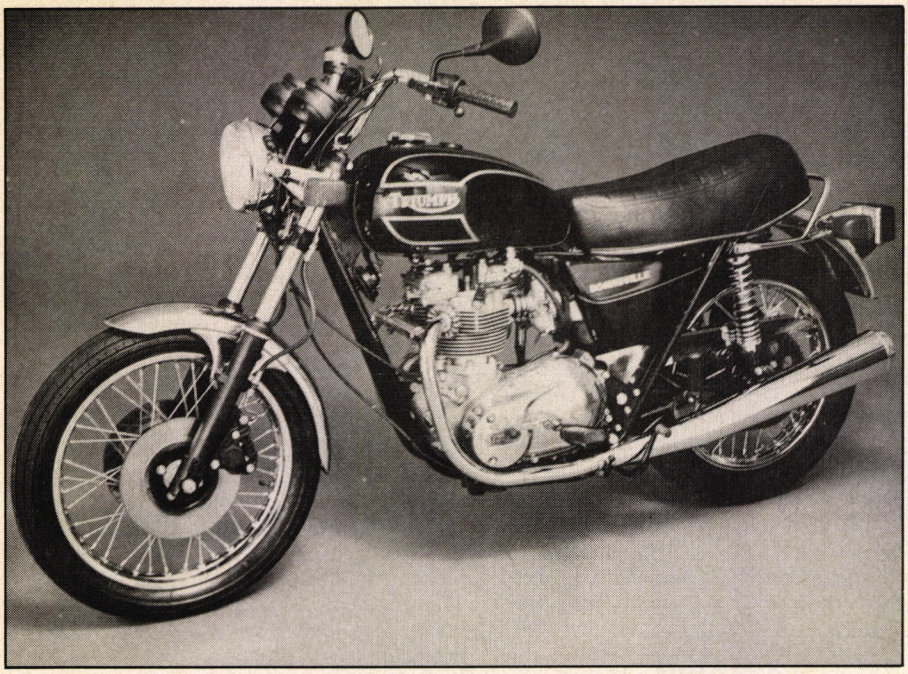

Small-tank Bonneville is slated to be 1986 production model for U.S. market

Triumph rises from the ashes—again.

reviving the Bonneville. The bikes will be built in both large- and small-tank (U.S. version) models, to much the same spec as the Bonnevilles rolling off the assembly line when the Meriden Worker's Cooperative folded in 1983. But there are a few changes: The new Bonnevilles reportedly beat the new British 85-decibel noise limit, and some Italian and German parts, including Brembo brakes, Paioli rear suspension and Magura levers, are included in this britbike. Breathing new life into the Bonneville seems to make good business sense, too: 3000 orders already have been placed. Sources Over There report that if everything pans out with the kickstart-only Bonneville, an electric-start model won't be far off.

• Triumph isn't the only two-wheeled comeback in the news, though. Lambretta scooters might well be available for U.S. sale again in the near future—that is, if a distributor or importer can be found. If the financial arrangements can be made on this end, Lambretta reportedly will export a 200cc four-speed scooter that can nudge 75 mph. The machine currently is undergoing EPA emissions testing.

• And while there are ups, there are downs as well, even in the world of scooters. Reportedly, Derbi Motor Corp. of Laguna Hills, California, a scooter importer, has filed for bankruptcy.

RUMORS

• This is the time of the year when the bottom drops out of the rumors business. That's because the futures market only has value when there's a hint of uncertainty in the air. Within a few weeks, that air of mystery will come to an end: Reality will come crashing down in the form of official announcements from the moto-manufacturers as to what will—and what won't—be included in the new-model

Continued

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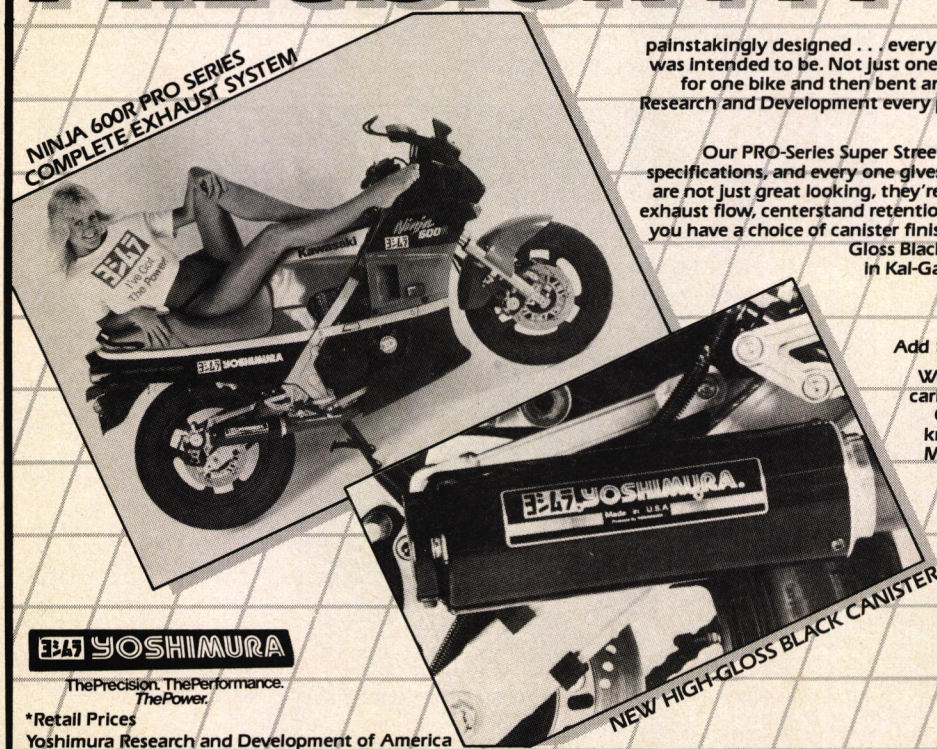

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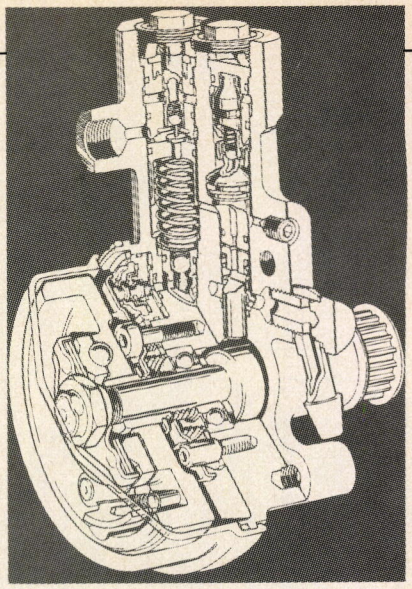
Lucas-Girling Stop Control System

Anti-lock with a lock on the market—for now.



• What is claimed to be the first anti-lock braking system developed solely for motorcycles has debuted in Britain. It's the Lucas-Girling SCS (Stop Control System), four years in development, and it's been in final testing by the police since the end of May.

What makes SCS different from other anti-lock brake systems is that it is all-mechanical; there are no microchips, no sophisticated electronics. And that, says L-G's Chief Engineer Neil Mathias, is what puts SCS one up on other anti-lock systems. Electronic braking systems developed for cars not only need microchips to interpret wheel deceleration, but they also need powerful, fast-acting solenoids to control hydraulic pressure, as well as high-pressure electric pumps and a power supply. In contrast, SCS is a simple self-contained hydro-mechanical unit, 6 inches tall and weighing just over 3 pounds.

Not only is SCS smaller and simpler than other anti-lock systems, it's also significantly cheaper, principally because there is so little of it. In fact, SCS reportedly would add as little as $115 to the price of a new motorcycle (the system probably would be fitted to the front wheel only). But L-G has no intention of putting SCS into production as an aftermarket item; rather, the firm hopes one of the major Japanese manufacturers will adopt SCS as original equipment.

And mechanical simplicity makes SCS a natural for mass production. There are only two main components: a tiny mechanical pump and a small flywheel, both run by a single shaft driven off the bike's front wheel. The pump pressurizes brake fluid from an external tank; that pressure is routed through a series of internal passages and forces down on a deboost piston. The piston in turn holds open a small cutoff valve that allows fluid pressure from the front brake lever to act normally on the brake pads.

Whenever the brake is applied hard enough to make wheel-lock imminent, a centrifugal clutch disengages the flywheel from the spinning shaft. A ball-and-ramp mechanism then pushes the flywheel axially along the shaft and forces it to open a dump valve. The pump-pressurized fluid that normally pushes the deboost piston down is released by the dump valve, and the deboost piston is free to move. As the piston rises, it also closes the cutoff valve and prevents brake lever pressure from acting on the disc pads.

In only 0.025 second, the SCS system detects imminent wheel-lock and releases the brake to maintain traction. Just as quickly, the wheel-driven shaft catches up with the free-spinning flywheel, and the entire process is reversed, allowing brake line pressure to again act on the disc. If excessive brake pressure continues to be applied, the entire anti-lock process is repeated in continuous split-second sequences, giving a characteristic pulsing feel through the brake lever, until wheel locking is no longer a problem.

As complicated as it sounds, the system works, and works well. I can vouch for that, after several panic stops on wet, slippery pavement. But actually testing SCS is more difficult than you might imagine. The sheer mental effort required to overcome years of *not* applying the front brake hard in the wet requires a lot of faith. Of course, I'd already seen a convincing demonstration by Lucas-Girling test riders, and the BMW K100RT I was riding *did* have outrigger skids. All the same, I still gritted my teeth when I tried that first wet-road panic stop.

The teeth-clenching wasn't necessary; SCS came on immediately, the brake lever went limp and then recovered. The RT lurched slightly, and the bike braked to a safe halt, with no drama, from 35 mph. Then I tried again from 50 mph; same effect, but naturally a longer stopping distance. Finally, I tried braking from a high-grip surface to a low-grip surface (though both were wet). The SCS provided the same progressive stopping.

In the dry, it was a different story. Repeated panic stops on dry tarmac with the front wheel hopping and squealing were necessary to get SCS to work. But that's the plan: The system is designed to give maximum deceleration *without* wheel-lock. So if you ride an SCS-equipped bike only in the dry, you might never notice anything unusual about the brake—but you'd feel it right away if you ever rode in the wet.

That, of course, presupposes that SCS gets into volume production. Ironically, though, research funding from Ford Motor Co. practically guarantees the system wil be fitted as an option on front-wheel-drive cars first. As for motorcycles, right now SCS seems like the answer to wet-weather braking, just waiting for someone to notice it.

—Chris Myers

Outrigger-equipped K100RT serves as test-bed for Lucas-Girling's Stop Control System

Anti-lock braking hits Skids Row.

lineups. So you see, the rumors that are burning holes in the industry's pockets must be spent, and spent now, before they're devalued. And one of the hottest pocket-burners of the moment is that Yamaha is working frantically to complete—of all things—an RZ400 Turbo. Highly placed sources already are whispering about a four-stroke, single-turbo 400 racebike. Other related conversation is that there's a 250 turbo F1 racebike in the works, with a 400cc streetbike to follow.

• Compared to a Tuning-Fork Turbo, the rest of the gossip about Yamaha seems almost pedestrian. First—and predictably—there's a rumored spate of displacement increases in store for Yamaha's '86 model line; bigger is better, after all. First off, we've heard the Virago 1000 will get boosted to something in the 1100cc-1200cc range, making it an even bigger boulevard boomer. Then, there's been plenty of talk that the phenomenally popular FZ750 might be even more attractive with another 150cc-250cc of engine displacement. And that, of course, leads straight into the backroom conversations about bumping up the FJ1100 to a 1200 or so, and shifting its emphasis more toward sport-touring, with integral saddlebags and a few selected long-haul gadgets.

• And where there's talk of going up in displacement, can talk of downsizing be far behind? One choice morsel of maybe that's making the rounds these days is the application of an FZ750-type treatment to Yamaha's FJ600. A different source suggested something similar, but with a twist. This insider said the program already is in the works, but the starting point was a 400 that would be punched out to 600cc, in an effort to produce the hottest over-the-counter sub-750 on the market.

• Not a bad little rumor, that. But as you can see, it's got a life expectancy that's measured in days. Either it comes true before the first frost hits, or it goes straight back into the possibles bag. And equally short-lived is the tale that there's a new V-Max in the offing. This one, we're told, is a muscular, 20-valve 750 that pumps out something in the neighborhood of 110 horsepower when you flex the throttle. The tag line to this story is that the V-Max's styling caught on in a big way when the bike was displayed at shows around the world, but the bike itself was too powerful. Reportedly, the smaller V-Max is being built primarily to accommodate those countries with horsepower limits.

• From the sound of it, you might think Yamaha is the only company with a surplus of could-be currency to be spent before the new model year. Hardly. The currency of rumors comes in all denominations. For instance, here's a small bit of change: a rumor that Honda shortly will unveil an all-new chain-drive 750. As the tale is being told now, the bike will debut as a racer first, with a streetbike to follow. Then, there's the item about the Gold Wing engine. Insiders have hinted privately that the competition has edged up just a bit too close, and some big changes are in store

Continued

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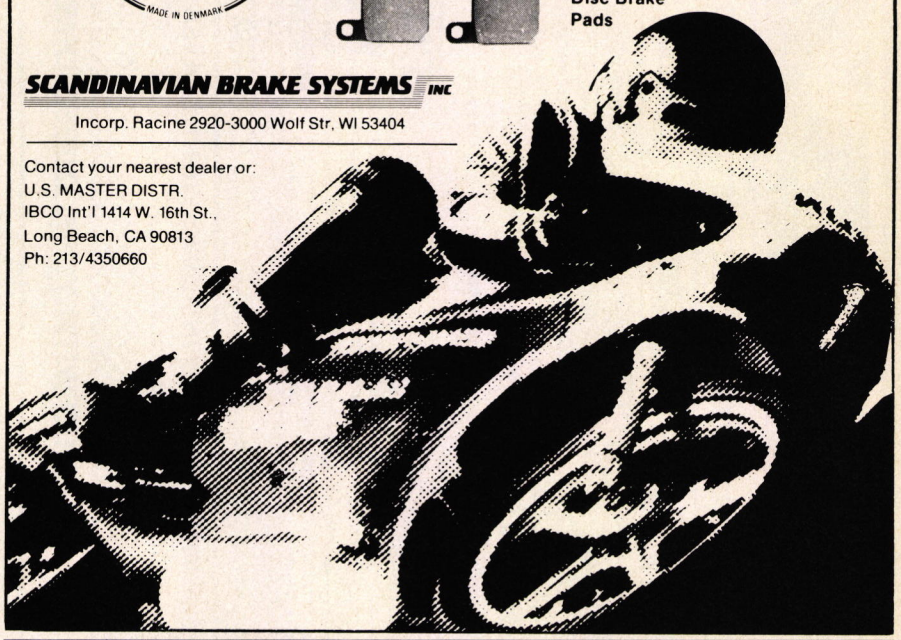

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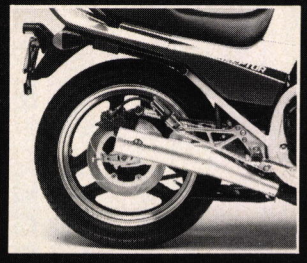

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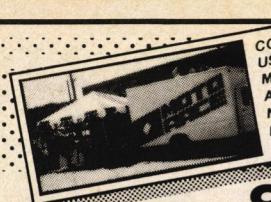

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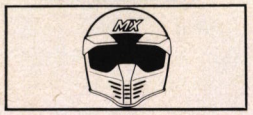

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GUIDE LINES *Continued*

for the GL's motor for '86. Finally, there's that story about Honda getting its feet wet by building something not very far removed from Kawasaki's Jet Ski.

• Not at *all* removed from Kawasaki is the next slew of scuttlebutt. First, sources inside have suggested there's a strong possibility the Vulcan will be bumped up to 1000cc. But that's just the beginning; there's also talk that Kawasaki will offer a Vulcan targeted for the sport-touring market, though the specifics on this particular tale have not been forthcoming. If that story bears fruit, it might be anything from a Kawasaki vee-twin with fringed leather saddlebags all the way to a big vee with a full electronics package and low bars. There's even some wild conversation circulating about Kawasaki—the last of the Big Four with a production Turbo—applying a little unconventional aspiration to the Eliminator. One insider said the project was firm for '86, and added that the in-house nickname for it was "Respirator." Finally, sources in Japan have indicated that there indeed will be another Eliminator for 1986; they say not to hold your breath waiting for a Turbo, however. The basis for this story is a 600 Eliminator, built around a Ninja 600 engine.

• For those with a taste for the knobbier side of things—rumors included—our men overseas have reported the strong possibility of a CZ motocross comeback. There's solid talk of a single-shock, liquid-cooled CZ MXer for 1986. Sources close to the story have confirmed a 44-horsepower, five-speed prototype with Ohlins rear suspension. The bike apparently is a reality; what no one's saying—at least not yet—is whether it will be available for U.S. sale.

• Staying with possible comebacks for a bit, we've heard that when Zundapp was closed, the entire production line, tooling and all, was purchased by a Chinese firm, which plans to put Zundapp back into production. On a somewhat less-substantial note, there's even talk from the financial community that, should trade barriers be worked out, certain models might be tailored specifically for the American market.

• Our overseas Trenchcoat Brigade has sighted a new Laverda 90 degree vee-three 350 reportedly scheduled for display at the Milan Show in November. Mysteriously, the film was fogged, but our man behind the lines says the engine has two cylinders inclined forward, one vertical, an arrangement similar to Honda's NS400 motor. He also insists the 350 is just the beginning of a new engine family, and that there's a 500cc version being readied for export.

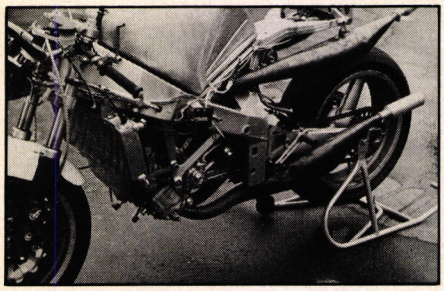
• Also said to be unveiled at Milan is a new Moto Guzzi DOHC 750 vee-twin sportbike. The information that's passed under the table so far is that the bike is shaft-driven, has four-valve heads, a six-speed gearbox and a claimed top speed in excess of 125 mph.

• Finally, though it might seem more like deja vu than anything else, there's talk circulating—one more time—about the Norton Rotary. Sources in England report the air-cooled Rotary, which has been available in a police-

only version only for the past few years, will be made available for general sale in a sporting configuration for 1986.

AFTER THE FACT

• Two issues ago, we printed a rumor from overseas about Cagiva. The story then was



Cagiva 90 degree vee-four engine

Powers rumors as well as racebikes.

that the firm's new 90 degree vee-four motor was the first wave of interest in vee-fours by Cagiva, an interest that eventually would be played out in production streetbikes. Shown here is that new 498.5cc motor, lodged firmly inside the Cagiva C10/V GP racebike. And just for the record, the talk of vee-four Cagiva streetbikes has done anything but die down.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• It's been said time and time again that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. If all that repetition adds up to a truth, Harley-Davidson must feel almost overwhelmingly flattered. Not only does a well-ordered army of Milwaukee-look clones already stretch nearly to the horizon, a new imitator has entered the scene. We've heard that Eurobike Ltd., a British motorcycle parts importer, soon will market a complete, kit-form replica panhead Harley for about half the cost of current H-D hardware. The kicker, of course, is that this forgery of Americana will be a melting pot of bits and pieces from around the world.

• Who was that masked man? Chances are good that it wasn't a motorcyclist, at least not in Plymouth, England. Full-coverage helmets have been used to mask the identity of robbers there, and local police have asked Plymouth shopkeepers to refuse service to anyone who enters a store wearing one of the helmets; open-face helmets are OK, though. So it's hats off to the bobbies—that is, if you want to transact some business.

• Of course, if you don't *mind* sliding into a holding pattern, there's always the Skybike, an unlikely mating of a Yamaha YZ80 and an ultralight aircraft. The 375-pound device, the brainchild of British firm Mainair Sports, was constructed to satisfy military and recreational purposes, and uses separate engines for land and air travel. Reportedly, Skybike has a 60-

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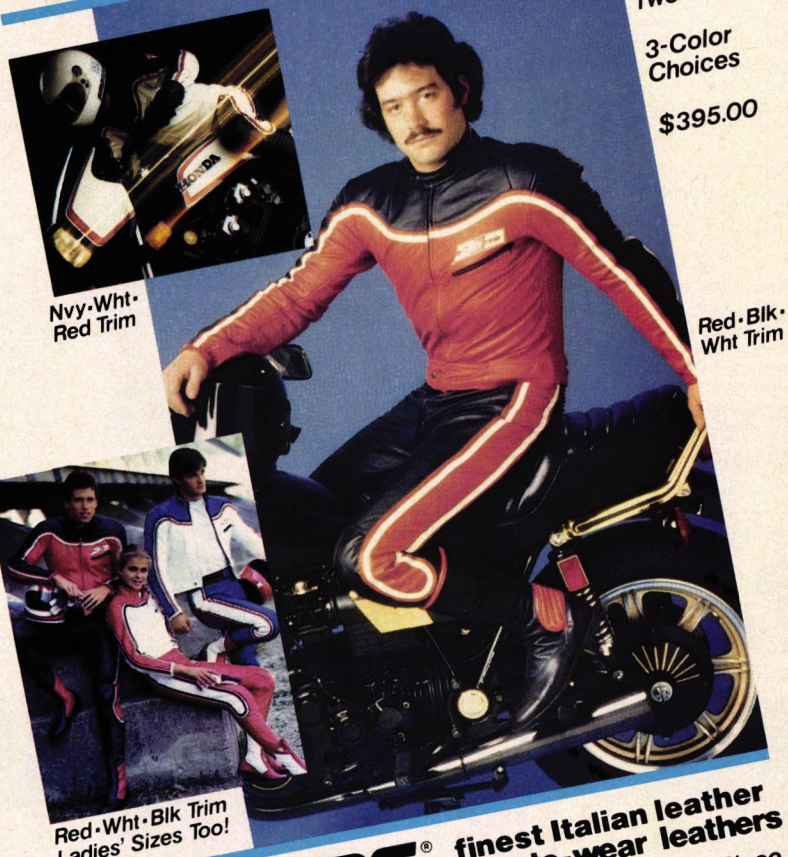

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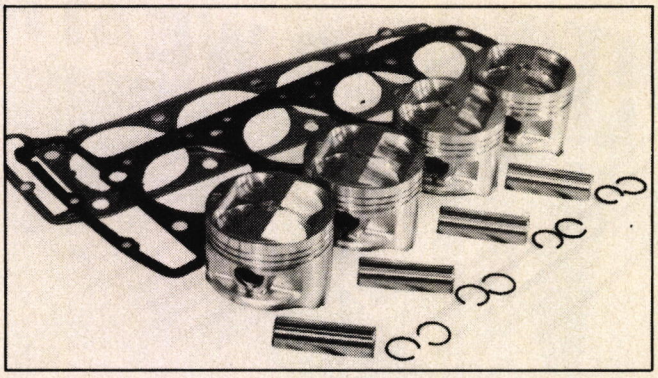

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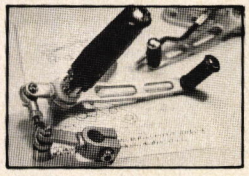

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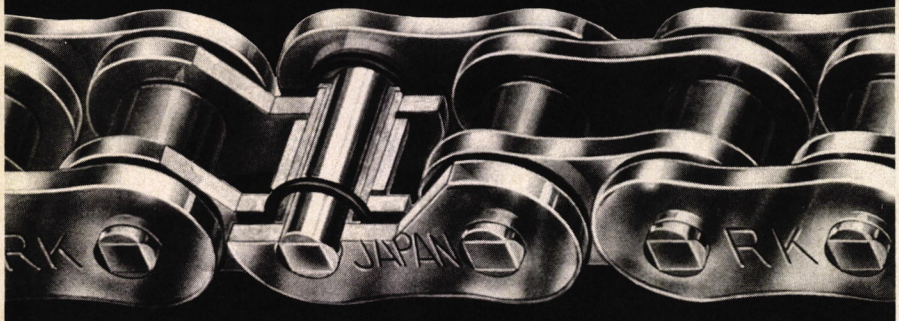

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mile range in the air, at altitudes of up to 10,000 feet, and the bike can be separated from its wing section in less than two minutes—presumably while Skybike is intimate with terra firma. Spokesmen for the firm say that if Skybike takes off, as it were, a sidecar version also is in the wings.

• Equally whacky, though earthbound—for the moment—is daredevil Bob Correll's record-setting jet bike. This quarter-mile monster is powered by a helicopter jet engine, replete with afterburner, which reportedly puts out 1350 horsepower. The 550-pound machine recently went 201 mph in the quarter-mile; 250 mph is in the offing once the bike is properly tuned, we're told.

• That's blindingly fast, to be sure, but this next item is every bit as memorable—though it's perhaps closer to blind than blinding. Stuntman Bob Duffey has his sights firmly set, albeit in an unusual direction, on a quarter-mile record. Duffey intends to ride a Kawasaki 900 Eliminator from a standing start to a speed in excess of 100 mph in 1320 feet. Nothing earth-shattering, right? Think again; Duffey will attempt the feat while facing backward on the bike.

• And for those of you to whom flipping down a sidestand is just chronic, pointless drudgery, there's new hope. An Ohio inventor has developed a motorized kickstand that can be operated while the rider is still on the bike. Vastly more practical than having your majordomo jog after you to put your sidestand down when you're ready to stop.

• But if that isn't sufficiently techno-intensive for you, here's a little something that should turn the trick. This spiffy little gadget plugs into your bike's wiring harness, has its own handlebar-mounted on/off switch, and clips to the top of a helmet. When it's turned on during a rainstorm, you can get a clear look at the bystanders guffawing and rolling in the gutters as you ride by. File this under Revenge of the Nerds. ●

You can see clearly now

A clear view of what's so funny.

The Isle of Man TT

An Artist's Perspective

TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS
BY ERIC GUSTAVSON

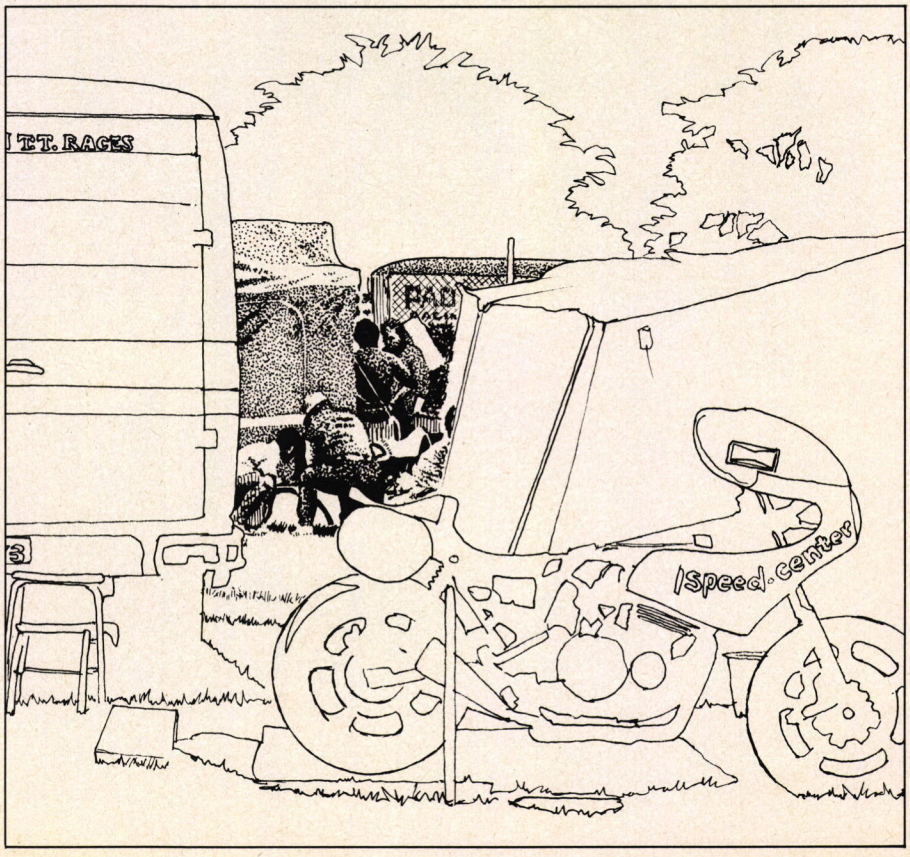
I can't quite remember the years—1963, 1964; or maybe it was 1965. But I *do* remember the names: Hailwood, Agostini, Redman, Ivy and Read were some of the riders; Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki and MV Agusta were a few of the machines. And they rode through places called Bray Hill, Quarter Bridge, Barregarrow, Ballaugh and Creg-Ny-Baa. Very odd names. But names that meant *roadracing* in those days—real roadracing, on 37¾ miles of public roads.

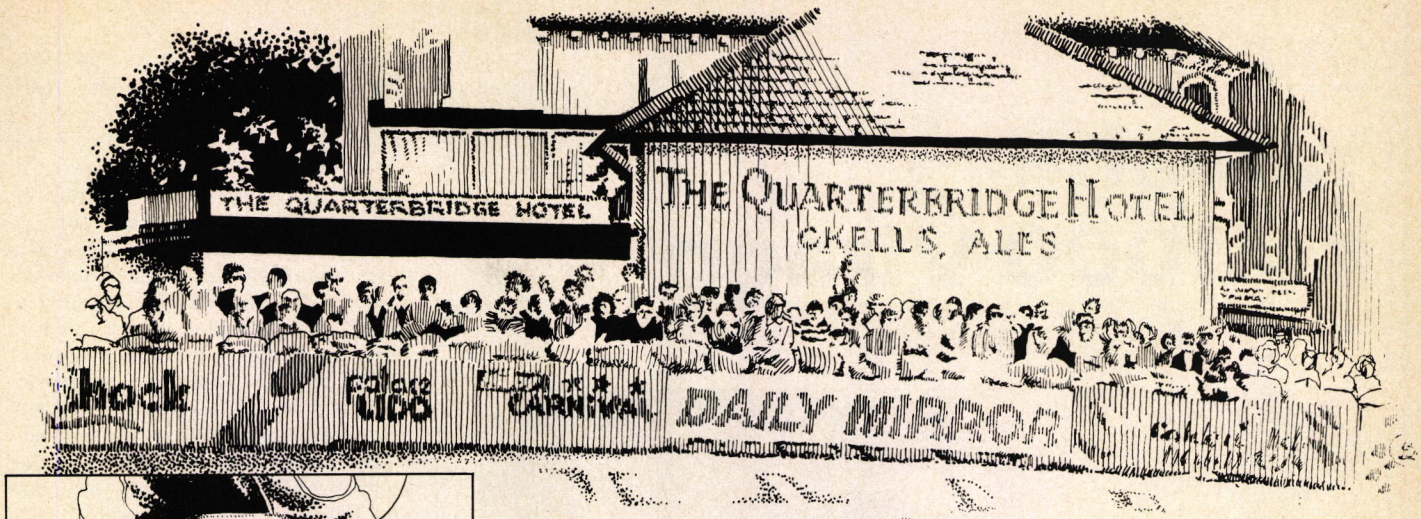
Continued

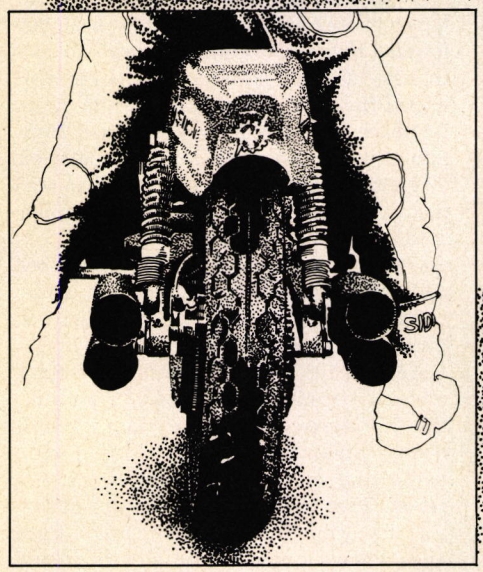
It certainly would be nice to see the Isle of Man TT races someday, I thought. Still, it was several years later, after listening to the sounds of Hondas, MVs and Nortons tearing around the Island, courtesy of Stanley Schoefeld's LP records, that I finally vowed to make the journey to the Faerie Isle. That was in 1974. Or maybe 1975. Funny how time slips by.

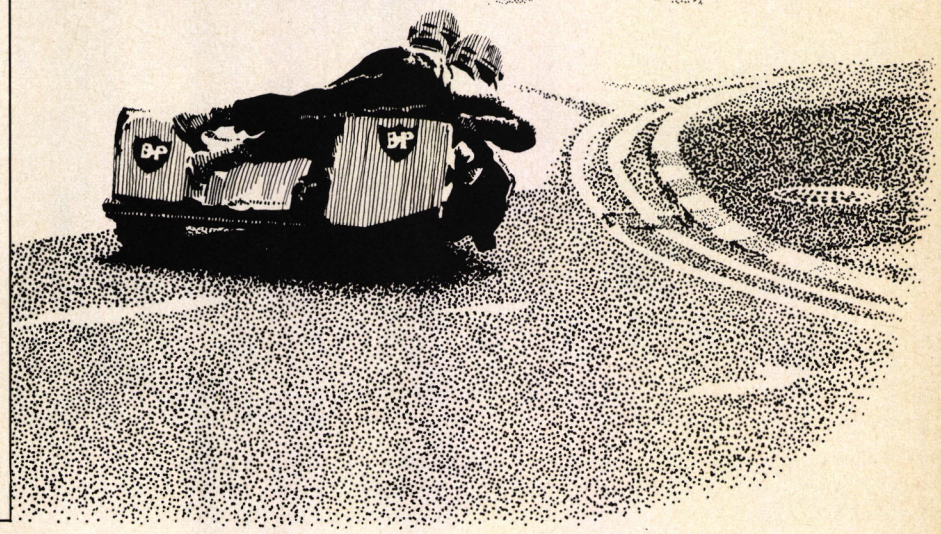
About that time, rumors began to fly about the demise of the Tourist Trophy races. "Not enough 'big name' riders," they said. "Too dangerous." So I decided to make some serious plans, and several years later, I finally found myself on a 747 bound for a two-week visit to the Isle of Man. There I discovered a storybook world of country lanes, lush glens, sandy beaches and verdant farmland. And motorcycles by the thousands. The first night, as I strolled along the promenade in Douglas, I was told there were more than 7000 bikes parked along a 3-mile stretch of hotels and boarding houses. Later on during race week 30,000 more would arrive.

The second evening, as I scouted vantage points near Braddon Bridge, a lone rider wearing a helmet painted to look like





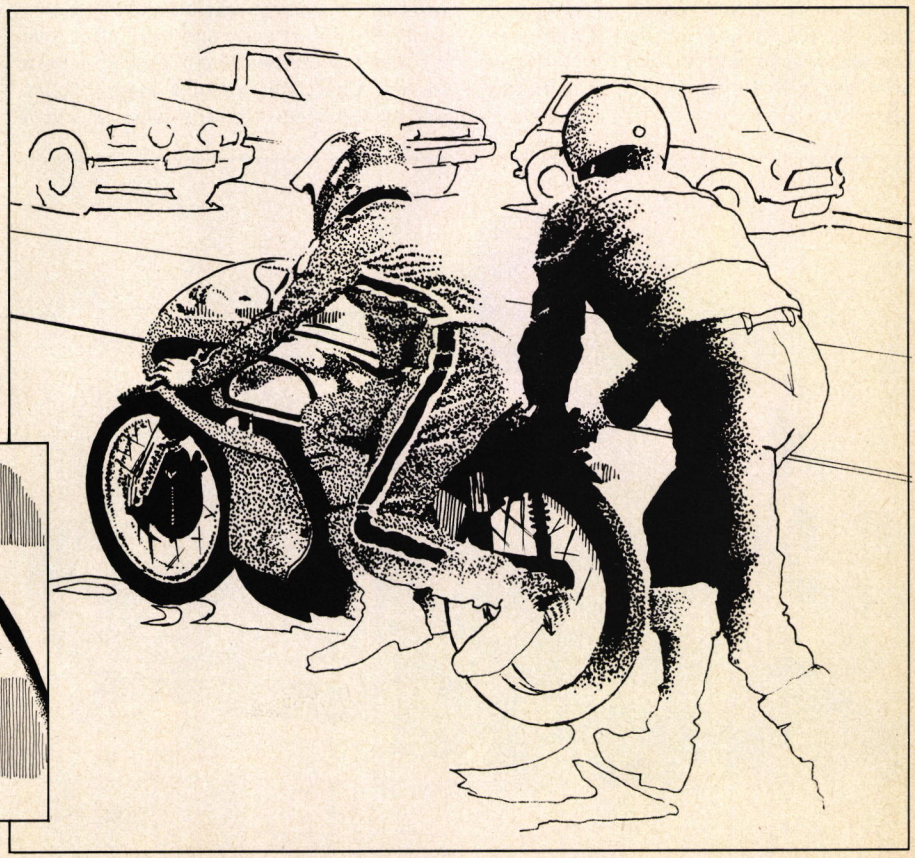


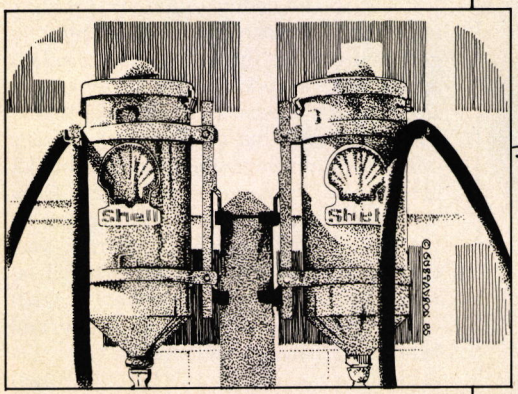


Phil Read's roared past. Correction; it *was* Phil Read. And everywhere I looked, all I could think was, "This is living history." To me, Hailwood, Ivy and Agostini were still there, and I saw them in every rider tackling the mountain course.

For myself, as an artist and motorcycle enthusiast, nothing can match motorcycle racing for its combination of beauty and speed, and if you've ever spectated at Loudon, Laguna Seca or Daytona, you've been to a motorcycle race.

But experience the T T, and you know you've been to Paradise. •





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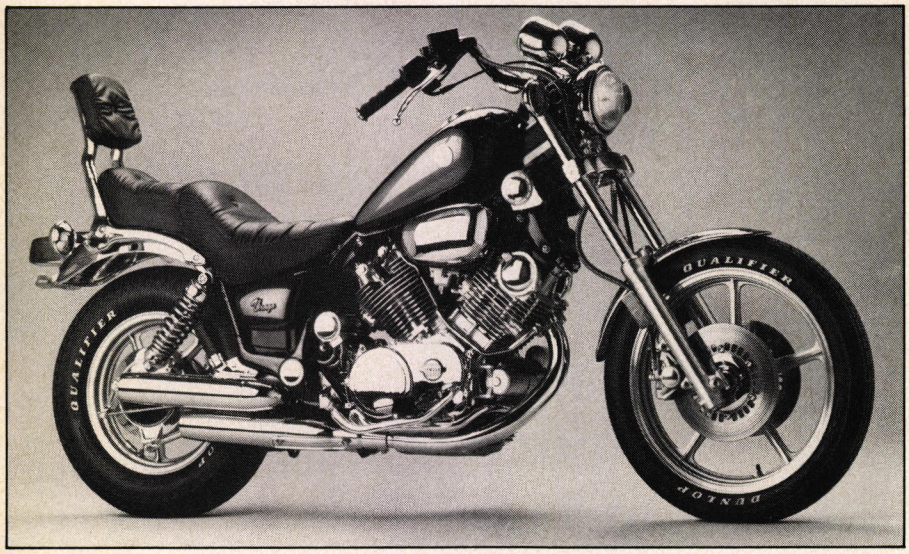

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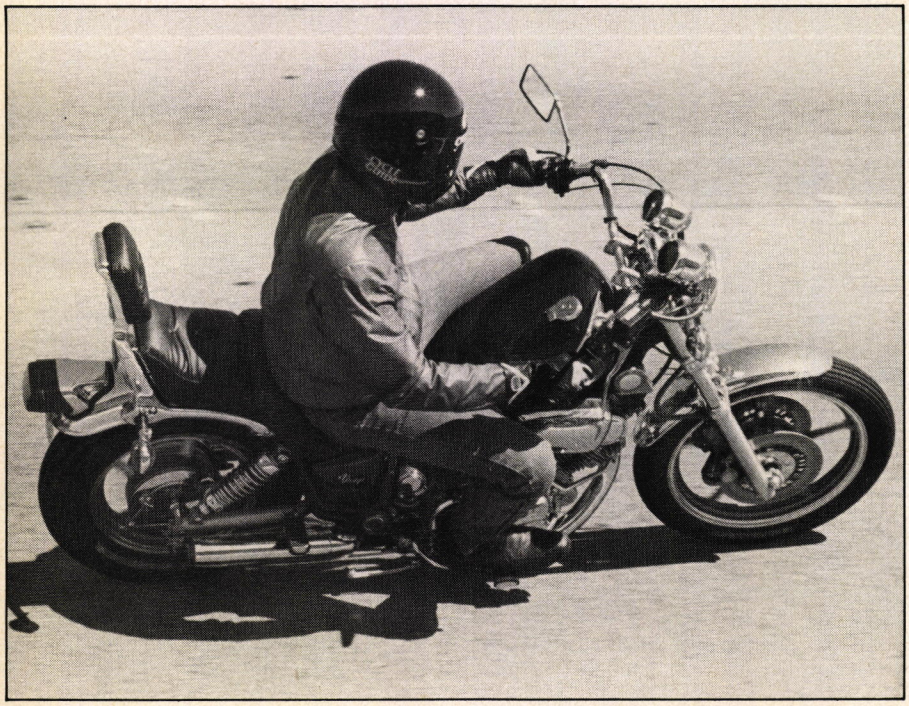
• There's little mystery surrounding the formula for building a successful vee-twin cruiserbike. Apart from the signature tandem-vee powerplant, certain features—a raked-out front fork, teardrop tank, pullback handlebar and low seat height—are the essential items a cruiser needs to gain admittance to the fraternity of boulevard bikes; any motorcycle lacking those qualifications simply need not apply.

Yamaha's Virago not only meets the entrance requirements of the Cruiser Club, it's one of the charter members. In fact, in 750 form it was the original Japanese tandem vee-twin cruiser, and year after year it's been a prominent member of streetwise society. This year, Yamaha engineers left well enough alone, limiting changes to little more than new coat of paint for 1985. But the big custom retains the torquey, free-spinning engine and impeccable around-town manners that made it a card-carrying member of the Club.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 STEVE COONAN

The big Virago has seen a number of changes since it first joined the Club in 1982. When applications were being accepted for the 1984 roster, Yamaha renewed its membership with a 1000 Virago, a much revamped version of the original XV920. The bike got a new chassis that year, and although the engine remained a stressed member, the Monoshock rear suspension gave way to a twin-shock setup that not only satisfied Yamaha's desire to give the Virago more cruiser-style visual appeal, but lowered the seat height a full inch—to 28.5 inches—as well. Yamaha engineers also upped their candidate's motor from 920cc to 981cc, through a bore increase from 92mm to 95mm; the stroke remained 69.2mm. In addition to the new displacement, the engine underwent some minor modifications aimed at reliability and federal emissions regulations: The cam lobes and rocker arms received a new hardening treatment, and an air-injection system was plumbed into the exhaust.

And for 1985, the XV1000's powerplant remains virtually unchanged. As a result, the 75 degree, shaft-drive vee-twin still boasts its predecessor's mile-wide powerband and almost limitless low-end punch. That kind of power is a welcome feature in any motorcycle, but for Cruiser Club members it's a prerequisite, and the robust vee-twin leaves no doubt as to the Virago's suitability for membership. Around town, its combination of idle-to-redline brawn and responsive carburetion enable the Virago to play Roadrunner to some sportbikes' Coyote at stoplights, and the liter-size vee-twin has enough muscle on tap throughout its powerband to summon up effortless top-gear passes on the freeway. And whether you're trolling urban byways or droning down the freeway, engine vibration never reaches an objectionable level, a remarkable achievement considering Yamaha's engineers elected not to equip the Virago's motor with counterbalancers or rubber mounts.

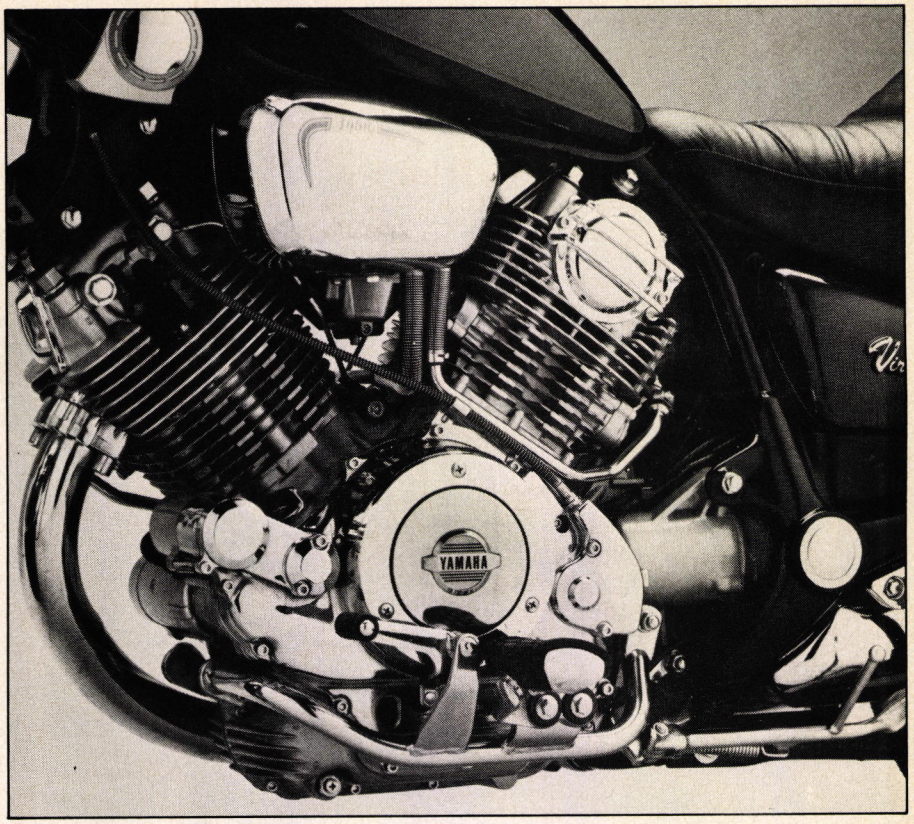
While the Yamaha's engine is at home in town or in the country, the city breeding apparent in its chassis outshines even its gold-and-chrome finish; the 1000 displays agility that's surprising for a motorcycle its size. And it's because of the low saddle and wide handlebar that the 507-pound Virago offers such maneuverability at parking lot speeds and in stop-and-go traffic. Even shorter riders can easily plant both feet on the ground while astride the narrow vee-twin, and the handlebar provides enough leverage to compensate for the bike's raked-out 32 degree steering head angle and longish, 59.7-inch wheelbase. But Yamaha achieved some of the bike's low-speed agility at the expense of rider comfort, because

in their zeal to give the Virago a low seat height, the engineers skimped on padding. The saddle feels thin and hard, and while it's fine for short hops, there's nothing about the Virago's seating arrangement that encourages long-distance riding.

Those meager seating accommodations won't come as much of a surprise to pilots hardened to cruiserbike ergonomics, but what might surprise some riders is the Virago's backroad ability. While not quite in the performance-custom class, the Virago acquits itself honorably on smooth, twisty roads, where its wide powerband, predictable handling and strong dual-disc front brake nearly belie its city-slicker pretensions. Within the limits imposed by its modest cornering clearance, the vee-twin's neutral steering lets it trace a precise arc through turns.

Moreover, the Virago's range of suspension adjustability saves the bike from being a one-trick city pony. For backroad work, the rear shocks work best with their rebound-damping adjustment set at No.3 (of four) and with the spring preload dialed to No.3 or 4 (of five), whereas the fork works best under virtually all conditions at Yamaha's recommended pressure, 5.7 psi. Together, the fork and shocks make it easy to hustle the Virago along mountain roads at a pace guaranteed to raise a few eyebrows among the boys back at the Club.

But like most of its fellow members, the Yamaha fits best in an urban environment. There, its comfort-related failings aren't as distracting, and the suspension does a good job making up for the bike's seating inadequacies. The well-damped fork responds smoothly to bumps and potholes, but the rear end—with only 3.3 inches of travel—bottoms heavily over large paving irregularities. Even so, under most circumstances the shocks provide a good ride, and control the chassis jacking characteristic of shaft-driven bikes.



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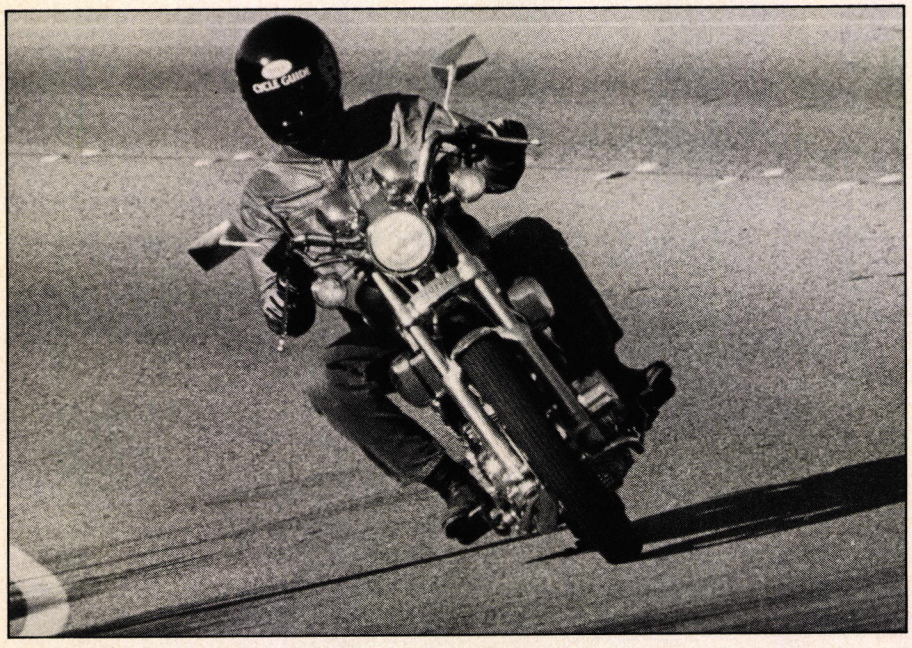
Brawny vee-twin forms an integral part of the Virago's frame

Stressed member in good standing.

With such a civilized downtown demeanor, the Virago has more than just the basic qualifications for Cruiser Club membership. Because, apart from its muscular vee-twin engine and flashy gold-trimmed custom styling, the Yamaha offers an obliging, easy-to-ride personality. Add in the bonus of good backroad ability, and you've got a motorcycle with an appeal that extends past the turnoff to the Club. In short, the Virago's status as a member in good standing of the Cruiser Club seems secure; good enough, in fact, to warrant nomination to the Boulevard Board of Directors.

—Jerry Smith



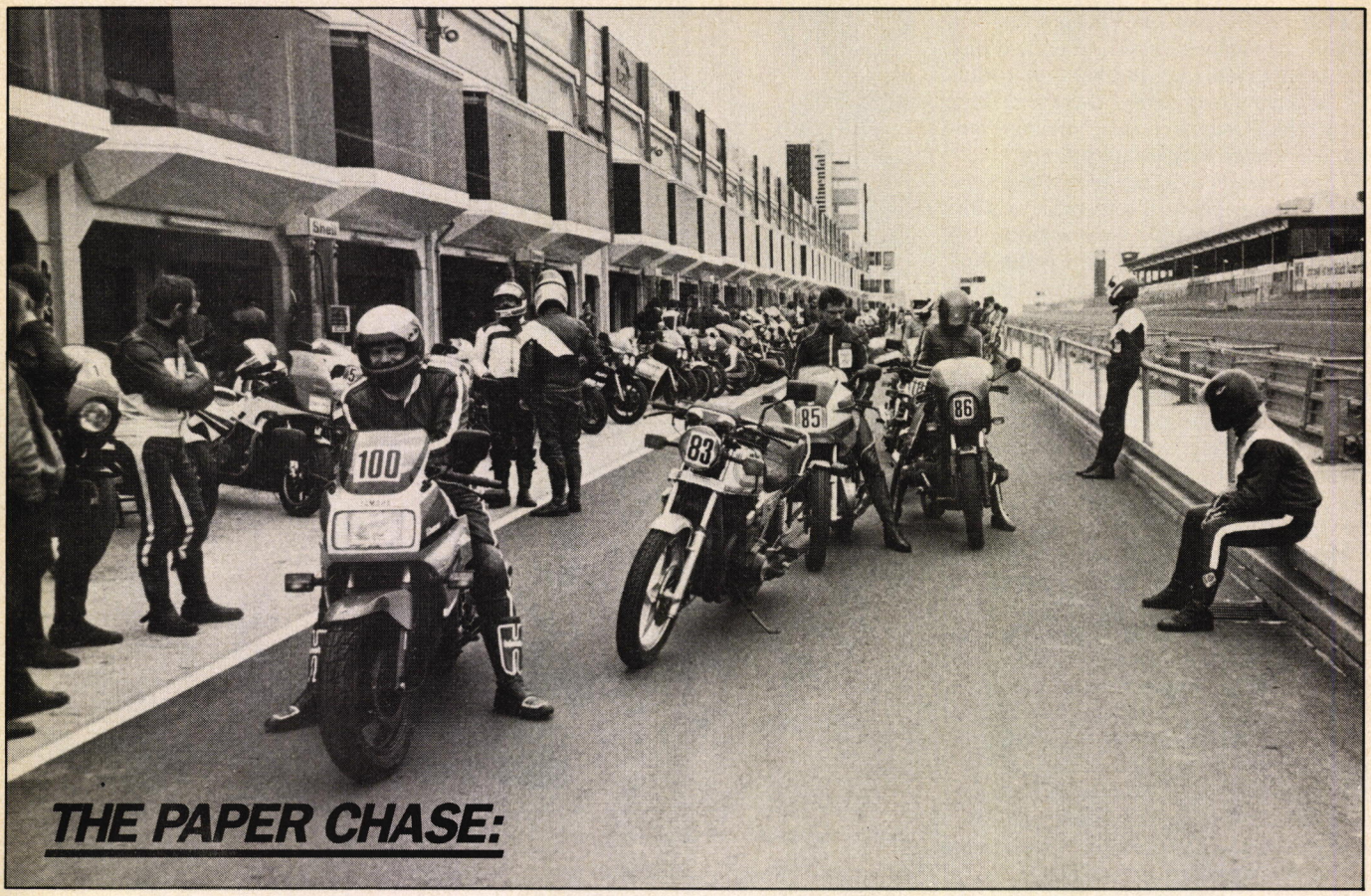
In-town traffic or country curves, the Virago leans both ways

Range of suspension adjustability provides the XV1000 with its slant on handling.

YAMAHA XV1000 VIRAGO

Importer: Yamaha Motor Corp. U.S.A.
6555 Katella Ave.
Cypress, California 90630

Category	street
Suggested retail price	$4499
Engine type	four-stroke 75 degree tandem vee-twin
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshafts
Bore and stroke	95.0mm x 69.2mm
Displacement	981.0cc
Compression ratio	8.3:1
Carburetion	two 40mm Hitachi constant-vacuum
Gearbox	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Kayaba air-spring, 38mm stanchion tube diameter/5.7 in. (145mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	dual Kayaba, 5-position adjustable spring preload, 4-position adjustable rebound damping/3.3 in. (84mm)
Weight	507 lbs. (230.0kg)
Wheelbase	59.7 in. (1516mm)
Seat height	28.5 in. (723mm)
Steering head angle	32.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	5.08 in. (129mm)
Best ¼-mile acceleration	12.933 sec., 101.59 mph (163 kph)
Top speed (observed)	111 mph (179 kph)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	132 ft. (40.2m)
Fuel consumption	33 to 47 mpg (14 to 20 km/l)
Warranty	12 months, unlimited mileage
Available colors	Glorious Maxi Brown, Urushi Black



THE PAPER CHASE:

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Nürburgring Riding School

In pursuit of the Perfect Line, from Flugplatz to Schwalbenschwanz.

BY CHARLES EVERITT

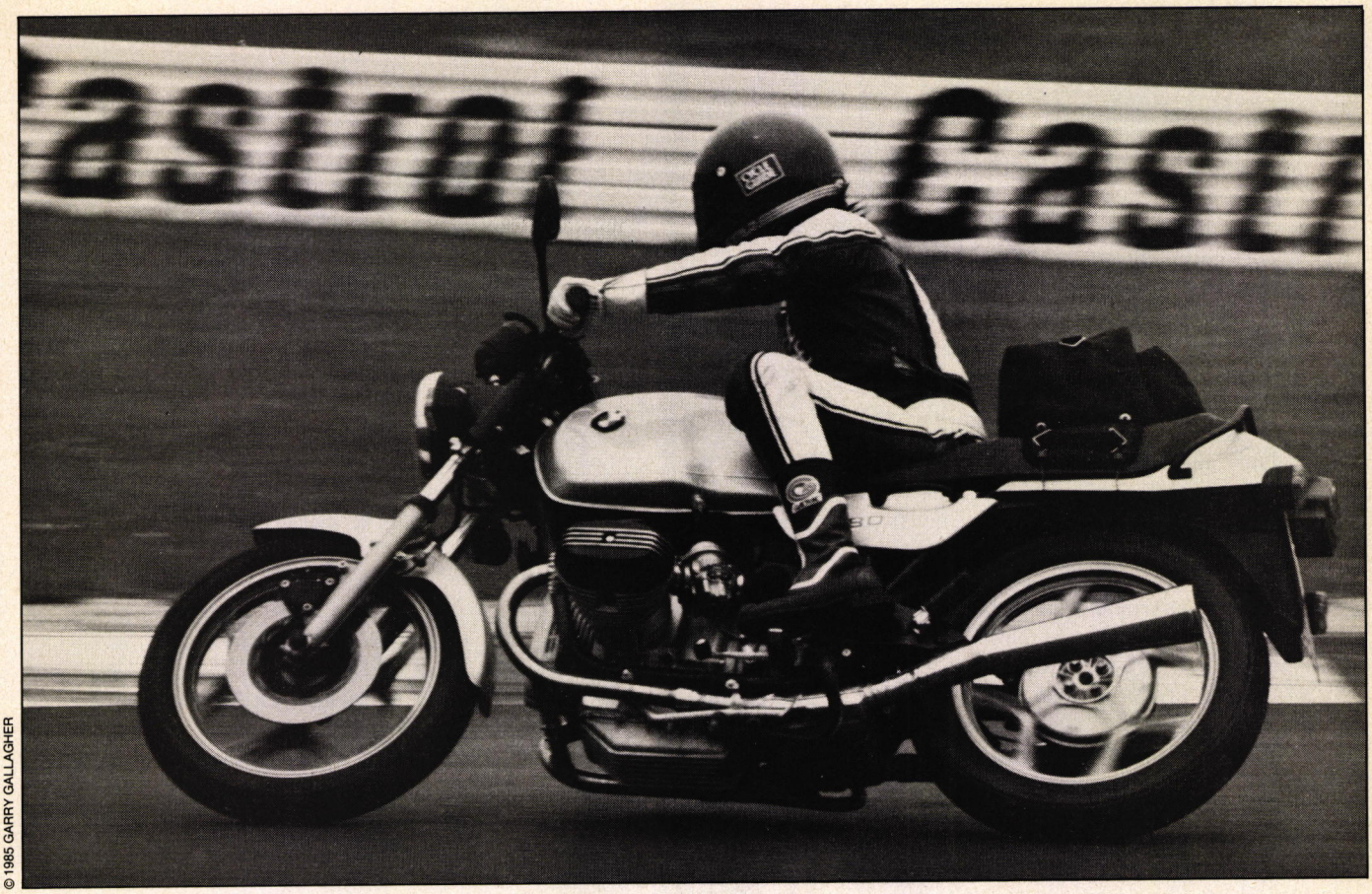
"Oh, no," I groaned. "You mean I have to ride *that?* Here?" "That" was a BMW R80, and although I have a great deal of respect for the German-made flat-twins, an R80 was one of the last things in the world I wanted to ride, because "here" was on a racetrack, the fabled old Nürburgring circuit, at the Nürburgring Riding School in Germany.

To understand my apprehension, you need to know something about the 'Ring. Approximately 13 miles long, and with some 171 corners, the Nürburgring is arguably one of the most challenging and difficult closed-circuit racetracks in the world. The course wends its way through the lush greenery of the Eifel forest, and, except for the long main straightaway, barely gives a rider a moment's rest; many of the corners' entrances are blind, some of them are on hills with few clues as to which way the track veers next, and heart-in-your-throat dropaways get thrown in for good measure. Lined with Armco, then trees, it's a place that demands utter concentration, and to deal with it I wanted to be on a competent sportbike, something that would make the transition from street to track easily.

You can imagine my consternation, then, at being provided an R80 to ride at the 'Ring. Shoot, I wanted to tear around that track at racing speeds, and I figured the bike was just going to hinder my progress. But I was in for another rude awakening; because at the two-day Motorrad Perfektions Training, a.k.a. the Nürburgring Riding School, the point isn't how fast you go—it's *how* you go, and fast has nothing to do with it. In fact, many of the instructors actually *discourage* you from trying to ride around the circuit at speed. Instead, the Golden Rule is: Learn the Perfect Line; the one, true racing line, the whole length of the Nürburgring. The impression was that the Line would be all ye know, and all ye need know.

Yet, on the face of it, the School had promised to a once-in-a-lifetime experience. What more could a person want than to be turned loose on a world-famous racetrack? Besides, the School seemed like an outrageous bargain, because for the paltry sum of 580 deutschemarks, you get two days' track time, expert instruction *and* room and board. All you have to do is show up with a bike, riding gear and gas money. The only hitch—other than being told not to go fast—was that if the weather turned foul, there'd be no recess; wet or dry, class goes on.

Still, shivering in my leathers on that cold, gray first morning, on a motorcycle I didn't have much use for, and told to go slow on a racetrack, I felt like I'd signed up for Algebra I and gotten Integral Calculus instead. But the surprises weren't over yet. Our instructor, Helmut Dähne,



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after hearing almost everyone in our group plead to go faster, told us we would take it easy at first and work our way up to speed. Sure thing. Dähne, you see, besides being a PR rep for Metzeler tires, is also an accomplished racer, with 20 years' experience at the 'Ring, and his definition of speed is somewhat more refined than mine. Yet, true to his word, he started out slow, and our little group (there were seven of us in Group 10) dutifully followed him, single file.

Before long, though, Dähne had us up to a pace that had my full and undivided attention. And it struck me that I was *glad* to have the R80, because it was light and nimble, and served me far better than most genuine sportbikes would have. That's because the Nürburgring has so many twist-dips and curves that I was simply lost most of the time, wondering which way to go next. A faster bike would only have gotten me into trouble quicker than I could get out, and I proved that to myself after begging a ride on a Kawasaki Ninja 600; I promptly missed a braking point and rode unceremoniously right off the track. After a couple of laps, I meekly asked to have the R80 back.

Most of the rest of the first day was spent riding round and round, trying to learn the elusive Perfect Line. That's no

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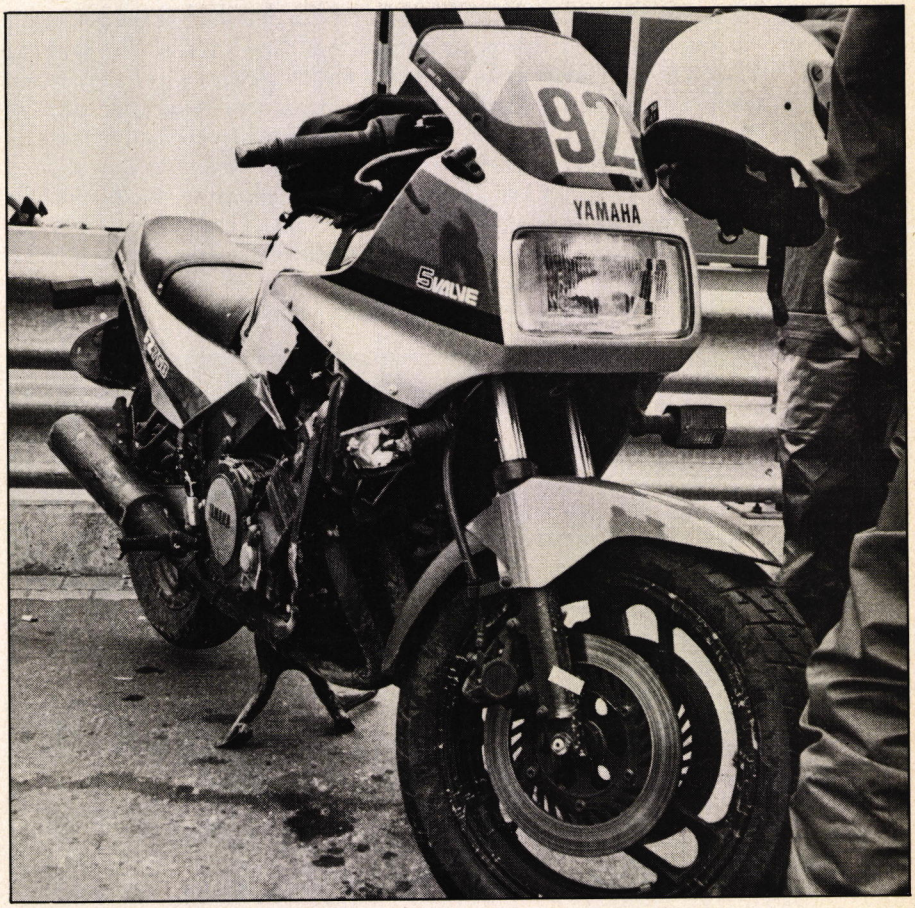

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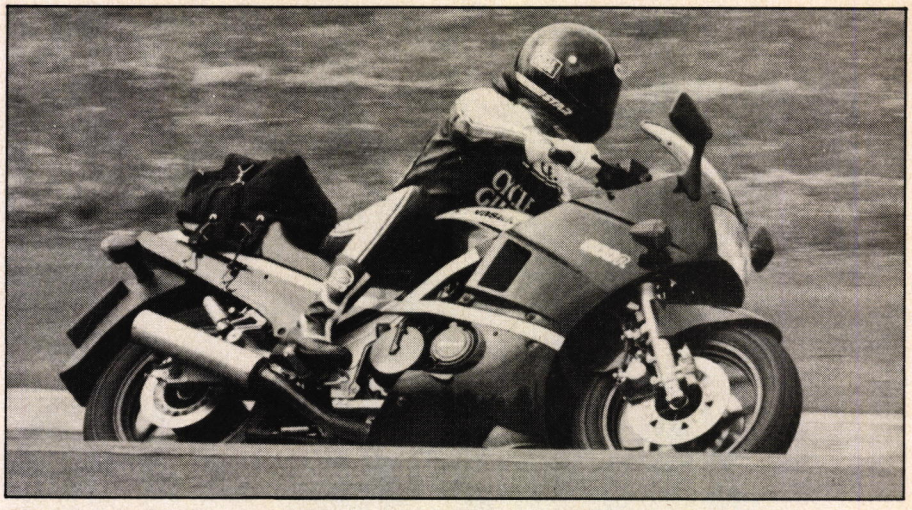
In a single instant, the Nürburgring School can become the school of hard knocks

The punishment for getting behind in your lessons is severe.

simple task, either, because not only are there myriad corners, but they come in countless combinations of twos and threes, and getting off-line through one turn can have you out of shape for the next three. It was especially difficult for me, because I have a street-rider's instincts, which made me want to deal with each corner individually, and stay away from the edges of the track. So what I learned that first day was humility; to me, the 'Ring was as confusing and impenetrable as molecular physics.

Still, there were more comeuppances in store. For example, for every corner I thought I had dialed in, the next series of three or four would flat baffle me. And on the second day, when each of us took our turn at the front of the pack, leading the group around the track, I left no doubt as to my massive ignorance of the Nürburgring's intricacies. It was easy to tell when I was on-line, because I could see the instructor and the whole group in my mirrors. But most of the time I was yards off, and I spent much of that lap looking like a bloodhound, wandering from one edge of the track to the next, trying to sniff out the elusive Perfect Line.

Indeed, trying to achieve the Perfect Line was much like trying to find the Holy Grail, and at first made about as much sense—to me, anyway. I figured the point of a racetrack school was to teach riders how to go fast. But the single-minded emphasis the instructors placed on learning the Line became more logical with every lap. Because, when I could follow right behind Dähne, and put my wheels right where his had been, the whole affair seemed almost effortless. Done properly, there was no need to struggle with the motorcycle; if I peeled off into a corner at the correct moment, the bike simply went where I pointed it, and the track seemed like an understandable, coherent whole, rather than merely a series of discrete corners connected by straightaways. It became clear to me then, that if I didn't learn—really learn—my way around, I couldn't begin to go fast at the 'Ring. Not even an apple for the teacher would help me there.



The author in study hall, groping for the Perfect Line through the Karussell

"Teacher, teacher, wait for me!"

And I'd like to be able to tell you that I learned the 'Ring, that I discovered the perfect way to get through all the corners with unpronounceable names, such as Hohe Acht, Fuschsröhre and Pflanzgarten. But the truth is I didn't, really, and at no time was that more obvious than for the final exam. That's right; the Nürburgring School has a final, and although it's not a multiple-choice test, the grading is done on a curve. At the end of the second day, all 10 groups, 95 students in all, gathered in the paddock, and each rider was sent off one at a time to complete a lap on his own. The 10 instructors stood at key points around the track, and they observed each student's progress; if you were so much as a foot off the Perfect Line, you got points added to your grade—the further off-line you were, the more points you got.

I got plenty of points, too; 31.5, to be exact, enough to place me fifth in our group of seven. I tried to put it all together, but it didn't work out quite like I'd hoped. Not even getting one of the answers to the exam beforehand seemed to help. Our instructor, Dähne, told us he'd be grading the Karussell, a long, banked, sweeping left-hander; he also said he'd be wearing a red jacket, and would stand right in line with the entrance to the corner. All we had to do was aim for him, and then apex the turn. So I think I aced the Karussell, but the rest of the track was just a blur. It was too much like cramming an entire semester's worth of work into two days right before the exam, and I ended up struggling through , searching vainly for the Line.

Even so, I was *happy* to be there. Not even my dismal performance could keep me from making the grade and getting my diploma, nor could it diminish the thrill of accomplishment from learning at least part of the track. There's something supremely satisfying—purifying, even—about finding the key to certain corners, and the Nürburgring has enough turns to take part of a lifetime to learn.

And that's why I'm thinking of going back next year and taking a post-graduate course. Because there are plenty of mysteries still locked up in places such as Hohenrain, Wehrseifen and Brünnchen. I got my degree at the 'Ring; now I want a Masters. ●

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Rain or shine, class stays in session through all 171 of the Nürburgring's corners

"Teacher, will this be on the exam?"

7

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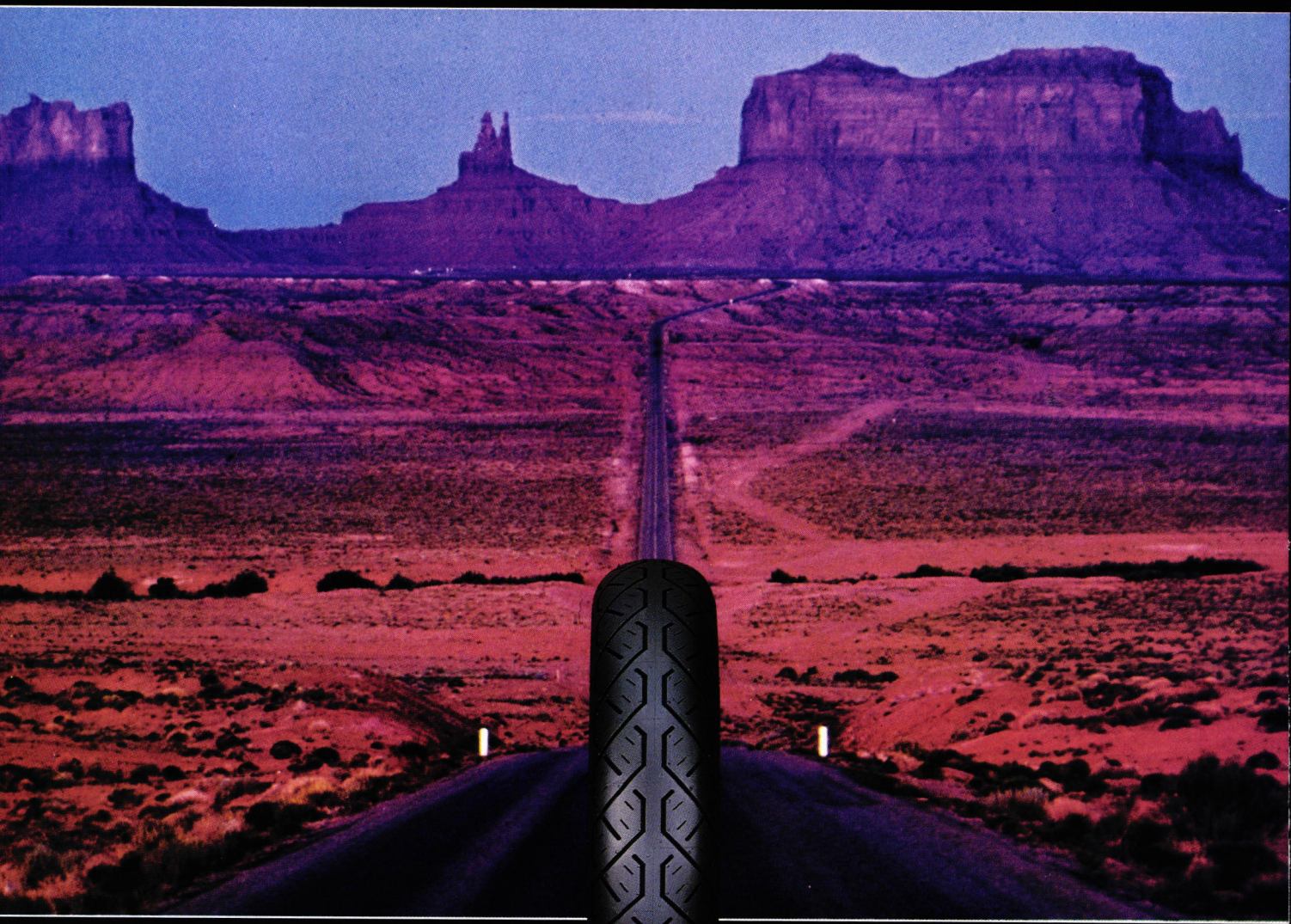

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Clockwise foreground to background: *Cruzer, Cassini, and Bomber.*

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Clockwise, foreground to background: *Supra, Paladin Jeans, and Ultra.*

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PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Scandinavian Brake Systems Brake Pads

The slow path to high performance.

• Most riders put a higher premium on tire-shredding, arm-stretching acceleration than on eyeball-popping braking, and, consequently, they overlook their bike's braking system in terms of performance hop-ups. Scandinavian Brake Systems would like to alter that line of thinking, and the firm's asbestos-free disc brake pads might just do that.

And part of what makes SBS' pads attractive is the firm's claim that its high-friction pads outperform stock items in high-speed, high-temperature braking. What's more, SBS says its pads work better when cold than stock pads, and have a longer operating life as well. But SBS offers another kind of pad—intended for rear-wheel use only—designed to provide *less* stopping power. And while the low-friction pads limit a rear binder's power, SBS claims they provide more feedback and therefore reduce the chance of locking the brake inadvertently.

Those claims are attractive indeed, and to test them, we ordered up pads for a Suzuki GS550ES and a Yamaha FJ1100. We chose those particular motorcycles because testing showed both to be somewhat lacking in brake feel, and in the Suzuki's case the brakes required fairly high lever pressure. And, after installing the pads, we followed the manufacturer's break-in procedure carefully, making 10 hard stops from 50 mph, allowing a few minutes for the brakes to cool, and then making an additional 10 stops.

With those steps taken, the pads' effect on the Suzuki's braking performance was substantial. Overall, the GS's front brake felt stronger, with improved feedback and more resistance to fade than with the stock pads. In addition, the SBS pads slightly reduced the lever pressure required during hard stops. And at the dragstrip, the Suzuki's braking distances benefited from the SBS parts: From 60 mph, the bike stopped in 130 feet, 8 feet shorter than stock. Some of the credit goes to the low-friction rear pads, too, because they offered better feedback, albeit at the expense of sheer stopping power, and made controlling the rear brake easier than before. For some riders, though, the SBS pads might be too severe: It took a firm boot to lock the GS's rear wheel.

The Yamaha responded even better to the low-friction rear pads. Although the rear binder provided slightly less stopping power than with the stock pads, it showed a substantial improvement in feel at the pedal and was less prone to locking. Likewise, the pads aided the Yamaha's front brake: The FJ's brake exhibited more feedback and power with the SBS pads in place. And during high-speed riding, the brakes showed virtually no fade—unlike the stockers, which tended to fade after repeated hard use. Also during those triple-digit escapades, the FJ's brakes displayed less tendency to grab with the SBS pads. What's more, the pads allowed the FJ to trim its 60 mph panic stop distance from 138 feet to a remarkably short 119 feet—one of the shortest distances we've recorded.

Those are respectable improvements for a stock-replacement part, especially for the Yamaha. And as icing on the cake, the SBS pads in general sell for lower retail prices than the factory pieces—in the Yamaha's case, as much as $9.00 less per caliper. Added together, the performance gains and lower price make SBS' disc brake pads an attractive deal. But the SBS pads' contribution to the Yamaha's and Suzuki's stopping capability rate them as more than mere stock replacement parts; in fact, you can consider them a genuine high-performance modification. —*Marc Cook*

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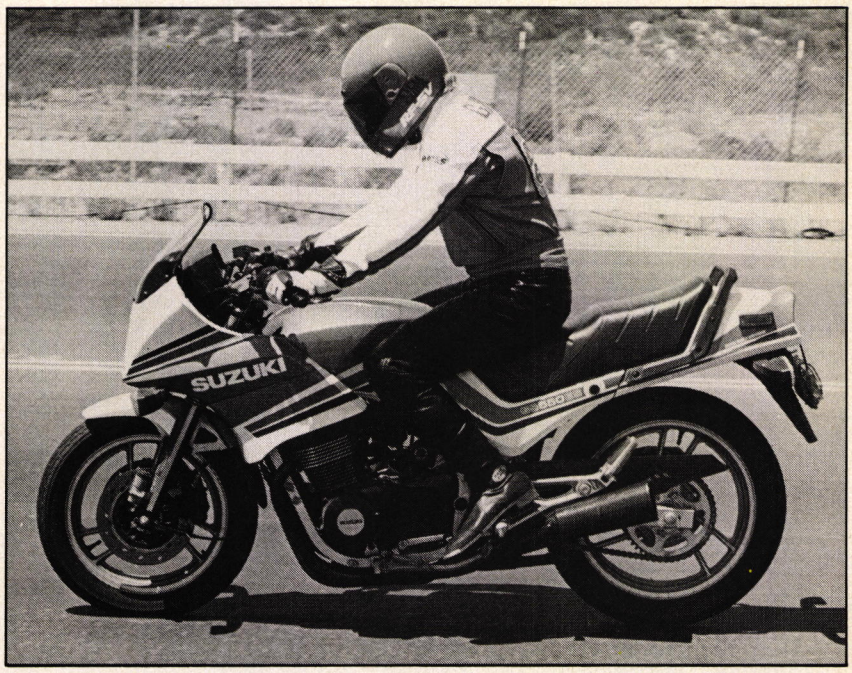
SBS pads come in two compounds

High-performance is a two-way street.

SBS Brake Pads
Importer: Barnett Tool & Engineering, Dept. CG, 9920 Freeman Ave., Santa Fe Springs, California 90670
Suggested retail prices: from $13.10 to $31.45 per pair



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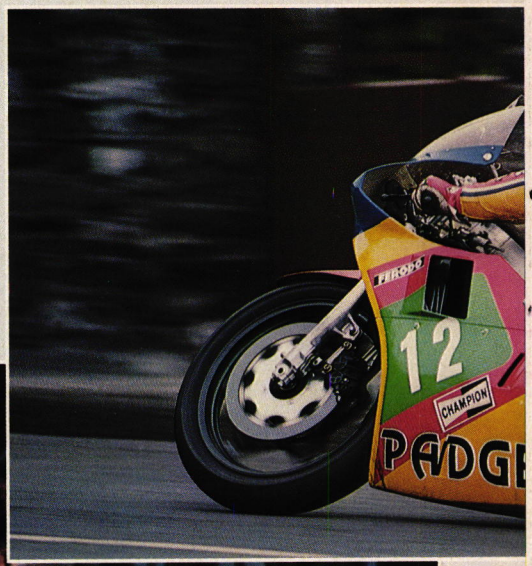
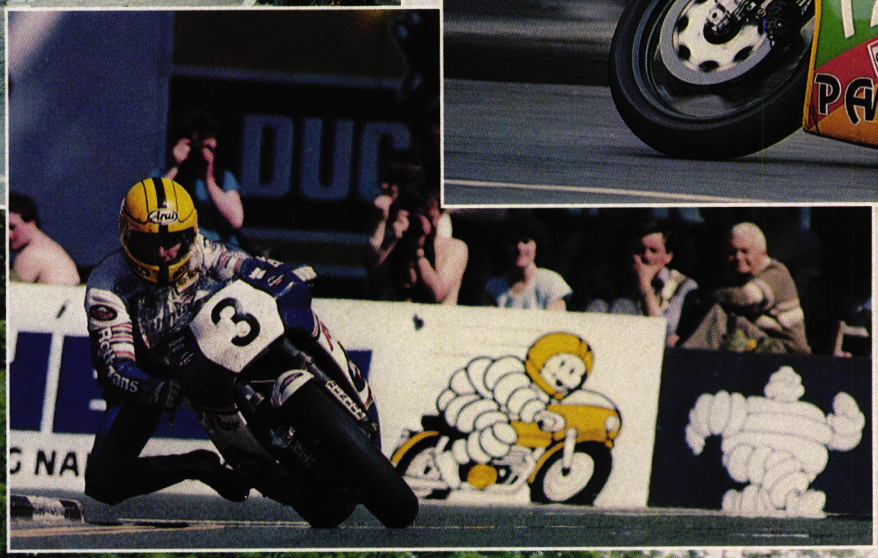
A case where less rear-wheel stopping power equals more overall braking performance

SBS-equipped Suzuki cut 8 feet its from stock 60-mph panic-stop distance.

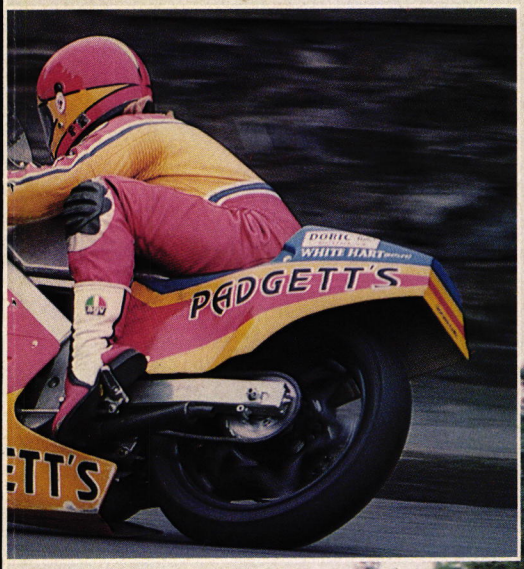


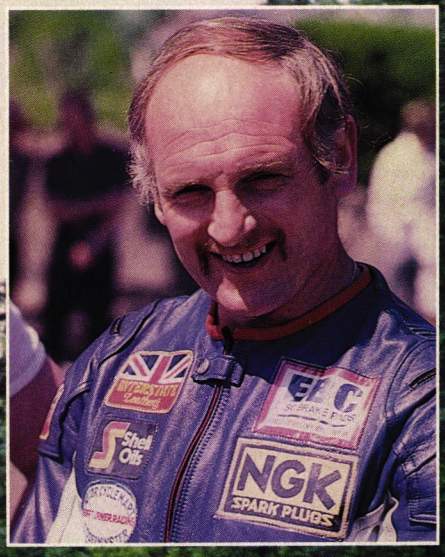


WILD IN THE STREETS:

The Isle of Man TT

Where roadracing means just that.





BY DAIN GINGERELLI

The spectators lining Bray Hill Road occasionally glance up toward Glencrutchery Road. They pay little heed to an elderly woman who is working tirelessly in a garden separated from the street by a low-standing stone wall, itself probably built 100 years ago. Then all heads turn quickly toward the top of the hill as the loud, wailing exhaust noise from a motorcycle blasts over the crest. The bike launches over the hill, front wheel leaping off the pavement. Then, while accelerating to 150 mph, the rider leans forward to push the front end down, with the rear slick spinning on the asphalt.

The elderly woman stops tilling the soil long enough to watch as the bike's front wheel touches down again. Almost as quickly and violently as it appeared, the bike vanishes down the hill to Quarter Bridge. Silence settles on Bray Hill again, and she resumes her chores. She seems unconcerned that another bike will soon follow, and then more until more than 110 racers have gone by. And she probably doesn't know that the rider she saw was Joey Dunlop on the No. 3 Rothmans-Honda RVF750, on his way to the first of three TT wins for the week, a feat that equals Mike Hailwood's record set in 1961 and 1967.

But the spectators at Bray Hill probably knew. They—along with thousands of others—had made the pilgrimage there to the Isle of Man TT, the oldest roadrace in the world. And according to the ACU (Auto Cycle Union, organizer for the TT races), when TT Week and practice ended, some 4538 laps—171,219 miles—were run on the 37.73-mile Mountain Course, a track first used in 1920. The Isle of Man's Mountain Course is one of the last of its kind, too, because the entire length of it—from the start/finish line at Glencrutchery Road, across Ballaugh Bridge, around Ramsey Hairpin, through the Gooseneck, past the Verandah and over Hailwood Rise leading back down to Governor's Bridge a quarter-mile from the finish line—is run on two-lane roads, winding through tiny villages and over the Manx countryside.

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

And during the week prior to TT Week, the Mountain Course is open for practice for the hundreds of competitors, every day from sunrise until 7 a.m. Then, the "track" closes, reverting back to public use, and until the next practice session in the afternoon, the Isle of Man goes about its daily business as if there were no racing there at all. But after the first race is run, there's no more practice—only racing. And for the remainder of the week, the tiny island that sits smack dab in the middle of the Irish Sea serves as the most famous roadrace course in the world. Nothing short of a world war has ever stopped the racing, either. It's been that way since 1907, when the Isle of Man's Short Course was first used.

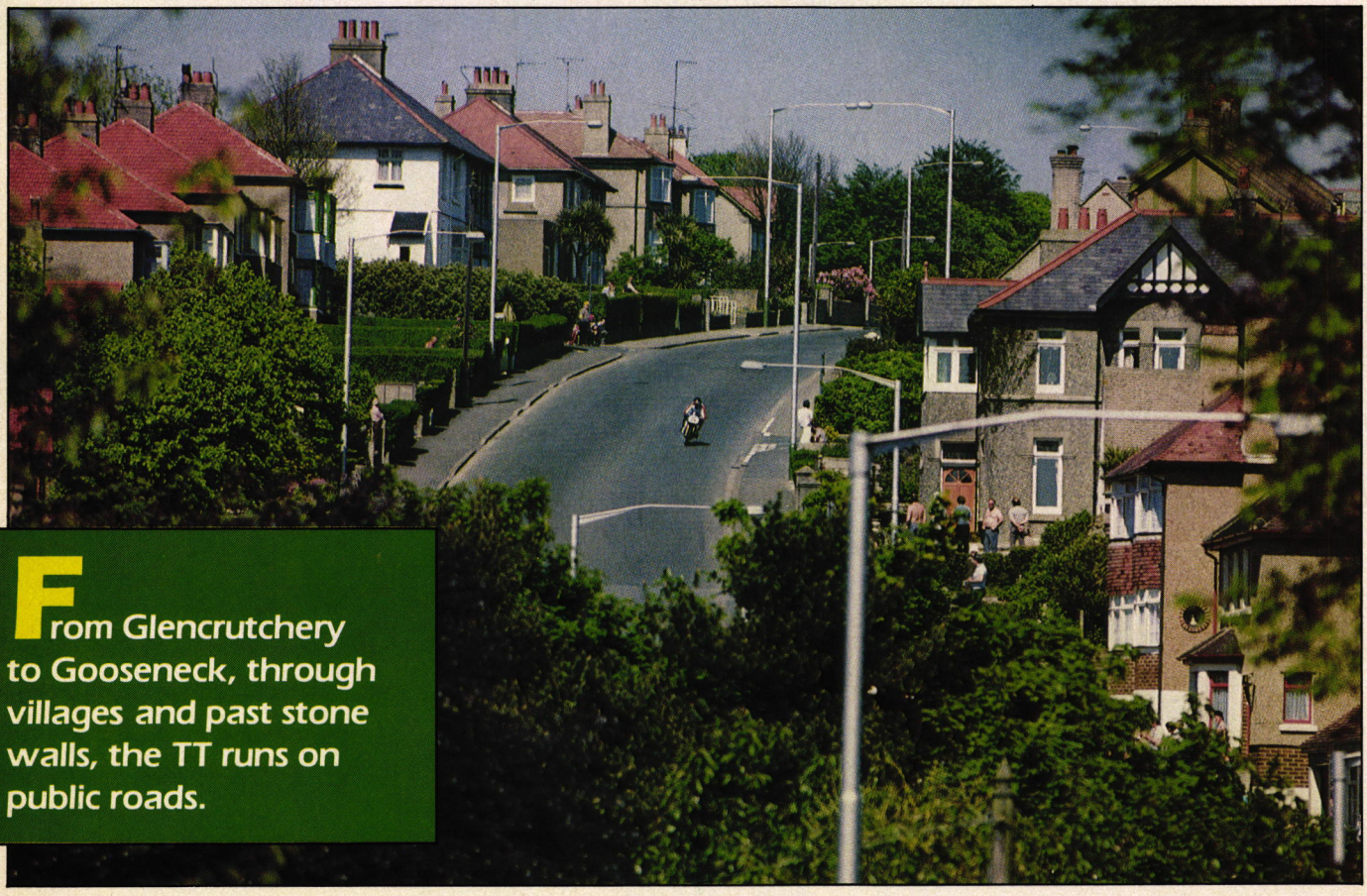
Obviously, the IoM races can boast quite a history, and as seven-time TT winner Mick Grant said, "One of the reasons the TT is so successful is that it is a traditional event." The tradition runs deep, too. For instance, Vernon Cooper, chairman of the TT organizing committee, celebrated his 50th anniversary with the TT this year. And Formula 2 winner Tony Rutter was competing in his 22nd year at the Island—and earning his eighth win. As for the Mountain Course's countless turns, they're pretty much the same as when Hailwood, Giacomo Agostini, Les Graham, Geoff Duke and Stanley Woods raced through them during the past half-century.

But the Isle of Man becomes more than just a racetrack during the first week of June. It turns into a carnival of motorcycle sights and sounds. Riders from Europe ("the Continentals" as the local Manxmen refer to them) and England ("the adjacent island") share the four-hour ferryboat ride with their bikes, from the west coast of England to Douglas, until every hotel and bed-and-breakfast inn on the island is full. Douglas' beachfront Promenade Road becomes an outdoor motorcycle museum of sorts, and bikes from out of the past, including BSA Gold Stars, Velocettes, Norton Manx 500s, Vincent Black Shadows, BMWs, Harley-Davidsons, MV Agustas, Ducatis and what seems like every Harris-frame Suzuki ever made, command almost as much attention as the racebikes do.

IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY OF
MIKE HAILWOOD, M.B.E., G.M.
PRESIDENT OF THE T.T. SUPPORTERS CLUB
WINNER OF 14 T.T. RACES (1961-1979)
WHO DIED IN A TRAGIC ROAD ACCIDENT
IN WARWICKSHIRE, ENGLAND. MARCH 1981.
THE T.T. SUPPORTER'S CLUB.

It's the racing that really keeps the Isle of Man packed with motorcycle enthusiasts every June, though. And it's the *kind* of racing the IoM offers that makes watching a TT so different from any other form of motorcycle competition. The riders are sent off in pairs, in 10-second intervals, making each race more a battle against the clock, rather than with competing riders. Simply put, the rider completing his six laps in the least amount of time wins, and as you might expect, there's little dicing. So, in order to keep up with riders' progress around the course, spectators either tune in to the local Manx Radio for up-to-the-minute reports, or they put their own stopwatches on the riders.

And it's how the riders beat the clock that further distances the IoM from other types of roadracing. The IoM TT, you see, has qualities found in practically every kind of roadrace track in the world: the top speed of Daytona's 200, top-caliber riders and all the danger of an Irish through-the-streets roadrace. Take, for example, top speed. Freddie Spencer's NSR500 was clocked at about 180 mph on Daytona's banking this year; yet two years ago, Mick Grant's Formula 1 four-stroke Suzuki 1000 registered 191 mph on the straight leading to Creg-Ny-Baa. The rider-entry list reads like that for a



From Glencrutchery to Gooseneck, through villages and past stone walls, the TT runs on public roads.

Mad Sunday

• Several Americans have, in the past, raced over the famed Mountain Course at the Isle of Man. Lance Weil rode a Harley-Davidson there during the '60s, Pat Hennen was the first rider to lap the TT course in less than 20 minutes, and David Roper won the Historic TT, taking home the gold in 1984. Now I can add my name to that elite list of Manx Yanks.

Well, sort of. I joined the Mad Sunday free-for-all, a day when a 7-mile portion of the Mountain Course—from the Gooseneck to Creg-Ny-Baa—is closed to two-way traffic, so that street riders can attempt to duplicate what the racers do during a bona fide TT. The object of Mad Sunday is to complete a lap, and the street riders pretty much have things their way all day, until finally, at 10 p.m., all the casualties are collected and counted. The unspoken rule is: no autopsy, no black flag.

My race started at Gooseneck, where I joined the fray aboard a Kawasaki GPz600R. A Yamaha RZ500 pilot, with passenger, immediately passed me leading up the hill, and as quickly as it happened, my Mad Switch turned on, and I chased them up the mountain leading to Hailwood Rise.

The next few miles passed quickly. We raced along at 125 mph, and I actually felt comfortable at that speed, because there were few walls and fewer houses along the road. Finally, I beat the RZ rider to Creg-Ny-Baa, where I figured the race would be over, and I'd leisurely circle the course back to Gooseneck. But, as I discovered, that was where the race actually *began*. Bikes jammed the length of the Mountain Course, and everybody, it seemed, wanted to be first. What they didn't know was that there was no beginning to the line, because there was no *end*. Still, we diced, and the mad scramble prevented me from focusing on the roadside trees and buildings that make the TT course like no other racetrack in the world. Survival was my goal. But the odds didn't seem to favor it. For instance. . . .

Scene One: I casually pull out to pass a slow-moving car somewhere between Glen Vine and Highlander. I swing out to his right, giving him a wide berth, when, with less than 2 feet to the curb, a guy on an FJ1100 passes me, narrowly brushing a roadside wall.

Scene Two: I'm entering Ramsey Hairpin, riding at ten-tenths again. I set up to outbrake a guy on a Honda 750 Interceptor into the uphill lefthander, and there, just before the apex, is a policeman, signaling me to slow down. He's waving his hands and pointing at me, and I figure it's time to throw in the towel—driver's license, passport and all—and watch as they throw away the key. Wrong again. He yells, politely as can be, "Slow it down, OK?" He *asks* me to slow down! I chuckle devilishly, but at the apex I say a silent "Thank you," to the officer; not for my license, but for my hide. A puddle of oil floods the corner, left there by a bent and twisted BMW K100 sitting alongside the road.

It was like that the entire 37.73 miles. People making crazy passes and crashing, and policemen standing idly in the wings. As the patrolman in charge of the Gooseneck said, "We could put up road blocks every few miles, but they'd still go crazy."

I know I did. But it's expected. After all, Mad Sunday is part of the IoM's tradition, one that gets every rider a little crazy. Just like the real racers do the rest of TT Week. —*Dain Gingerelli*

Grand Prix, too. Grant, Steve Parrish, Roger Marshall, Rob McElnea and Ron Haslam are all IoM and GP riders, past and present. Indeed, the TT was an integral part of the world championship until 1974, when it was scratched from the FIM calendar because racers felt the Mountain Course was unsafe for the high speeds GP bikes were reaching.

Losing world championship credentials didn't stop the ACU from continuing the racing, though. In fact, the TT still has world championship status for Formula 1 and 2 racing, and this year Dunlop and Rutter won those events respectively. The remainder of the racing—the Junior TT (250cc), Senior Classic TT (500cc two-strokes and 1000cc four-strokes), Production (250cc, 750cc and 1300cc) and Sidecar—is for trophies and money, not to mention the glory that winning the TT brings. After all, not only is this the oldest roadrace in the world, it's probably the most challenging.

That challenge includes racing inches away from buildings and stone walls, hazards that make the TT course unlike most other racetracks. Many of the Mountain Course's apexes are marked with curbstones, roadside houses and brick walls, and if a rider cuts it too close, he could quite literally become part of the scenery. Dunlop once said of the wall leading into Handley Corner, "I like to stay wide here; the wall's a bit close for me." Some buildings are so close that riders claim that even at about 150 mph they hear the echo of their bike's exhaust blasting off the walls. And even apart from the risks of racing inches away from

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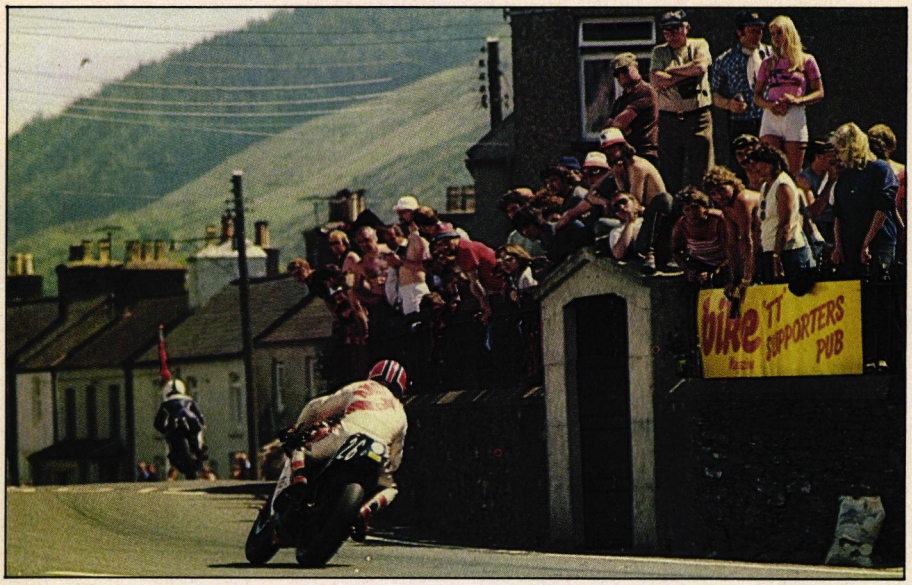


stone walls and buildings, the TT course is bumpy. "The bumps here make it rough on the bike," 250cc Production class winner Mat Oxley said, "causing a lot of mechanical breakdowns." The rough surfaces are just one more problem associated with racing on public roads.

Accompanying the bumps and the danger of riding 'round the houses is the seemingly endless network of turns. At 37.73 miles, it's almost impossible to remember *all* the corners, which makes racing the TT all the more difficult. Even Dunlop, presently considered the best TT racer, admitted he has a tough time recalling the turns' names. "I don't really know all the names to the course," he said. "I just know the sections that I like and dislike. I judge the turns by their likes."

But perhaps what most separates a TT race from other roadraces is the distance.

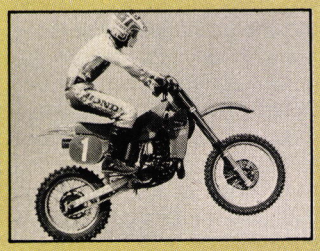
> **"The TT boils down to an endurance race. You have to finish, and that's the hardest part."**

The major TT races, such as the F1 and Senior Classic, stretch six laps; that's 226 miles, 26 more than the main event at Daytona during Cycle Week. "As much as the Isle of Man is an out-and-out race," Steve Parrish, a veteran of GP and TT racing, said, "it boils down to an endurance race. You have to finish, and that's the hardest part about this race."

And finishing, almost as much as winning, is what every entrant races for. Because every finisher—from first to last—is awarded a Manx Replica, a small medallion depicting the Isle of Man's legendary three-legged logo. According to Manx folklore, the logo is symbolic of the island; legend has it that the three-legged creature always lands on its feet no matter how hard, or far, it is thrown. And that's how the Isle of Man TT races have survived the years, by landing feet first. World wars, rider boycotts, even labor strikes by local unions have threatened the racing in the past, even postponed it. But in the end, the TT races survived, proving that the TT is more than a tradition; it is a way of life. And in the process, the oldest roadrace in the world has become one of racing's greatest shows. ●

OFF-ROAD

Monthly Proof that Man Does Not Live by Tarmac Alone



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David Bailey on the Chopping Broc

• Immediately following the AMA/InSport Tour Supercross at Houston, Texas, 10th-place finisher Broc Glover filed a protest against Honda's David Bailey. Bailey had crashed off the track, and Yamaha-mounted Glover claimed the Honda rider's subsequent return to the race violated AMA rules, because Bailey didn't re-enter the track where he went off.

The protest was denied, but Glover appealed and won. As a result, the revised Houston SX results dropped Bailey from sixth place to ninth. That in turn altered the series standings prior to the final event at Pasadena, moving Bailey's teammate, Ron Lechien *up* two more points, 209 to Glover and Jeff Ward's 211. Like a famous baseball player once said, "It ain't over 'til it's over."

—Dain Gingerelli

Trials on the Isle

• Mention the Isle of Man to a roadracer, and he'll know exactly what you're talking about: TT Week. To most trials enthusiasts, though, the Isle of Man is just a faraway island in the middle of the Irish Sea. Nothing more.

But that's hardly the case, because the Manxmen also host the Isle of Man Stadium Trials every year during TT Week. In fact, the Isle of Man event originated seven years ago, and is considered to be one of the first indoor trials ever. Traditionally, the course is laid out inside King George V Park, an arena reserved for horse shows, soccer and other typically British sports. "It takes several months to plan and prepare the obstacles," said Kevin Cleave, clerk of the course. "Then our riders (club riders) have to test them, and make certain they're safe, yet challenging."

This year's obstacles proved challenging, indeed. There were 12 of them, including, for example, an Austin 1100 (England's answer to the Chevrolet Chevette) and a battered van the riders had to climb over, two cement-mixing tubs to pass through, a seesaw ramp and a quadrille of railroad ties to overcome. Not your typical sections, but demanding enough to require serious trials riding skills. Indeed, *no one* cleaned all 12 obstacles, although 1984 winner Mark Hicken and eventual winner John Lampkin each earned only five points during their first of two passes.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

Still, for all 20 entrants, the Isle of Man Stadium Trials offers the opportunity to demonstrate, in a confined and easy-to-observe arena, the excitement their sport offers. The program lasts about three hours, and all the riding is within view of every seat in the house.

The packed arena this year

Continued

also was evidence that Stadium Trials is no longer simply considered a diversion for the roadrace fans; Stadium Trials, at least on the Isle of Man, qualifies as a legitimate event. And although the near-standstill speeds the trials bikes reach might seem to pale in comparison with the speeds riders like Joey Dunlop reach on the TT Mountain Course, both events offer superb displays of skill, and show riding at its best.

—Dain Gingerelli

What Goes Around Comes Around

• During the USGP at Carlsbad last June 23, Broc Glover threw caution—and the rule book—to the wind. He crashed and went off the track while chasing his archrival, David Bailey, in the

second moto, then resumed the chase after bump-starting his Yamaha against the flow of traffic on the course. Honda rider Steve Witlock later protested Glover, citing an FIM rule that prohibits such a move. Consequently, Glover's second-moto finish was disallowed. Bailey won overall. *—Dain Gingerelli*

Jolly England

• When John Lampkin won the Isle of Man Stadium Trials, he smoked the competition—literally. Before Lampkin completed his first pass on the course, his British-made Armstrong 350 began spewing clouds of smoke out the exhaust pipe, which prompted the track announcer to quip, "It looks like he's running on coal." After a brief pause to let the chuckling of the mostly British crowd subside, he added, "Buy British."

—Dain Gingerelli

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Offroad Products Quick-Access Tool Belt

Four out of five ISDE riders can't be wrong.

• Most dirt riders are familiar enough with the scenario that they've come to accept it as one of Murphy's own laws: The further away you are from the toolbox, the greater the likelihood that the motorcycle will break down. Experienced riders try to carry enough equipment to handle most trailside fixes, but short of carrying a Snap-On rollaway, it's difficult to keep those tools organized. Offroad Products offers one popular solution to the toolbox conundrum, though: the Quick-Access Tool Belt. In fact, 80 percent of last year's American ISDE team wore them.

And the reason for such near-universal acceptance is the nylon Offroad Belt's unique design. Unlike conventional, tube-shape fanny packs—which have a single cavernous pouch—the Offroad Belt offers five separate pockets to hold tools and other items. The Offroad Belt keeps all your tools handy, too. In the zippered main compartment, there are five elastic straps and five small pockets, to hold everything from a plug wrench to allen keys, so there's no need to dump the entire contents on the ground just to find a screwdriver. Moreover, the Belt's design keeps it compact, approximately the size and shape of a hard-cover book. That virtue, along with the wide strap, makes the foam-padded Tool Belt sit flat against your back. Consequently, it stays put, and doesn't bounce around to pound your kidneys.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

The Q-A portable toolbox's design offers easy access to your tools, as well; you can spin the bag around your waist to the front, or just remove it via the quick-release plastic buckle. Opening the outer Velcro-fastened flap uncovers a two-way nylon zipper that runs around three sides of the bag. Unzip that, and the belt opens like a book, with all your tools neatly displayed—you don't even need a Table of Contents.

There's also room for larger items in a slit-pouch in front of the main section, and a snap-fastened pouch behind it. The back pouch is just right for carrying spare levers or sprockets, and can even hold a tube for the rider who wants to rival a Boy Scout for preparedness. That same rider also will want a means of inflating the tube, and the belt has that covered, too, with two side pouches large enough to carry three small carbon-dioxide canisters.

In fact, the Offroad Products Quick-Access Tool Belt has a place for almost anything you'll need on the trail. Best of all, you'll forget it's there—at least, until you need it. And that's not something you can say about a Snap-On rollaway.

—David Dewhurst

Offroad Products Quick-Access Tool Belt
Manufacturer: Offroad Products, Dept CG, P.O. Box 1040, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, 02895
Suggested retail price: $36.95
Available color: blue

Swedish Tease

• Each manufacturer follows its own strategy at new-model time. Some rush to be first; some split their introductions to provide a one-two punch of new models. Others hold back, then deliver a devastating rush of spanking new hardware. And then there are the teasers. The teasers are out early, but with little hard information. That air of mystery is designed to start your imagination flowing in the right direction—toward the dealership. When you're primed, when the hook is in nice and deep, the trap is sprung: By the time the full information on the teasers is out, the question isn't whether or not you'll go for a given brand, it's which *model* will trigger your wallet-reflex.

Take this trio of '86 Husqvarnas, teasers all. Full specs aren't out yet; just the advance photos. What *is* known about Husky's single-shock, automatic-transmission 430AE is tempting, though. The liquid-cooled 430cc engine is new this year, as is the addition of a front disc brake. And both the 500TC and 510TE

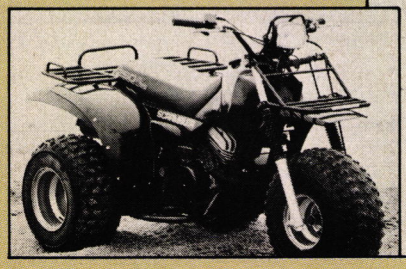
are ample proof that Husqvarna still sees four-strokes in its future. For '86, there'll be Husky thumpers in motocross, cross-country and enduro versions. All the four-strokes will have disc front brakes, redesigned air boxes and fuel tanks with integral air scoops.

So, consider yourself teased. But now that you know how the system works, you won't fall for the look-but-don't-touch attraction of these three, right? Sure, sure—but you'd be a lot more believable if you hadn't already checked your wallet.

—Larry Works

Moto-Missiles

• A declaration of war from Minnesota against Japan could be expected to be big news. And while that's not exactly the case, Polaris Industries Inc., the Minneapolis-based snowmobile giant, *has* launched a pair of missiles. The firm recently



tossed its helmet into the ATV ring with the three-wheeled Scrambler and the Trail Boss, a four-wheeler with McPherson-strut front suspension. Both models are chain-driven, and powered by 244cc engines with electric starting and oil-injection. The motors are manufactured by Fuji, which has provided Polaris with snowmobile engines since 1968. Transmissions for both the Scrambler and Trail Boss also are derived from Polaris' traditional snowmoble technology: Both ATVs come with Polaris Variable Transmission (PVT)—torque converters—similar to those used on the firm's snowmobiles.

The converter-equipped ATVs might encounter some market resistance if Polaris had to educate potential buyers about the merits of PVT, but the firm already has a captive market of converter converts: snowmobilers. Polaris will market the Scrambler and Trail Boss through its existing 1100-dealer network, and hopes to capture 3 percent of U.S. ATV sales—quite an impact for a two-missile salvo.

—Larry Works

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

COMPARISON TRAIL TEST:

Honda XR600R vs. Yamaha TT600

Proof that the best way across the dirt isn't always the fastest.

BY DAVID DEWHURST

• There's a perfect formula for ear-to-ear grins: Add one big-bore four-stroke to one dirt road, and the sum is kick-in-the-pants fun. And there are few bigger—or better—thumpers for fireroad fun than Honda's new XR600R and Yamaha's latest TT600. Because, despite their serious looks, these four-strokes are intended to win dirt riders' hearts—not races.

Yet even though thumpers of this size are simply too unwieldy for serious racing, Honda and Yamaha didn't skimp in equipping these big-time playbikes. In fact, the manufacturers seemed to be thinking along the same lines, because both 600s can boast a long, similar list of high-tech features usually found on serious two-stroke racers. For instance, both have aluminum swingarms with rising rate linkages and adjustable shocks, and they have disc brakes that would do justice to a motocrosser.

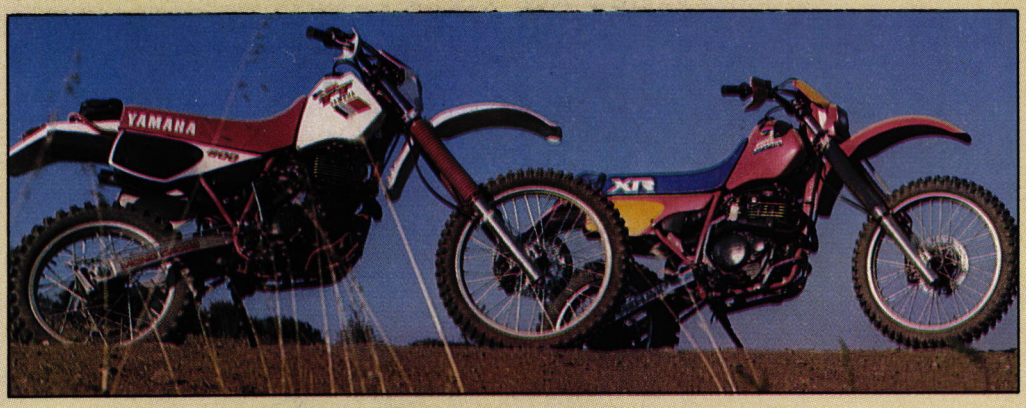
The similarities extend to the powerplants, too, because both 600s have counterbalanced four-valve, single-overhead-camshaft motors with twin head-pipe exhausts. Moreover, the TT and XR also use twin-venturi intake systems, although the two designs part company in specifics. The XR has two 28mm Keihin slide/needle carbs, one opening at partial throttle to give good low-speed response, while the second carb is pulled open for high-rpm power. Like the XR, the TT has two venturis, but only the primary choke is cable-operated; the other carb is a CV unit, mechanically linked to the primary carb and opened by intake-manifold vacuum whenever it's needed. But the detail differences in the 600s' carb

setups don't give either bike an advantage in throttle response; both the TT and XR carburet crisply throughout the rev range.

And apart from their carb-related differences, the two thumpers seem to take almost parallel courses. Indeed, for '85 Honda changed its big-bore XR so that specs for the two singles are closer than ever. For example, the engineers gave the '84 XR500 a 5mm larger bore and stroke to pump it up to a full 600, and thus match the TT. Accompanying that increase are larger, 36mm intake valves (up 2mm from the 500) and 31mm exhausts (up 1mm), still arranged in a radial configuration. Complementing the other tuning changes are longer header pipes to increase power. Honda then turned its attention to the chassis, adding a new aluminum swingarm and altering the rear suspension linkage to reduce its rising-rate effect from the XR500's figures. There's also a new frame with a square-section front downtube, 28 degree steering head angle (an increase of 2.5 degrees), and 118mm of trail, 4mm more than last year.

By comparison, the Yamaha is largely unchanged. In fact, apart from an increase to 595cc in 1983, the TT motor is essentially the same as when it was introduced nine years ago. That doesn't mean Yamaha has ignored the TT's development, though. For instance, to improve high-speed handling, there are stiffer springs and increased rebound and compression damping for both the fork and shock. Plus, Yamaha added a shrouded front disc brake, and, to save weight over last year's TT, laced YZ-style Z spokes to hollow-bead rims.

Obviously, then, both manufacturers took these thumpers a step further for '85. But in doing so, Honda and Yamaha also brought them closer together, because after a quick read through the specs pages, you might think the XR and TT come from the same company. The two make nearly the same peak power, they weigh within a pound of one another, they share an identical 37.2 inch seat height, the same 28 degrees of rake and 4.65 inches of trail. Yet whatever the specs pages tell you, these bikes *feel*



completely different. Not even the identical seat height makes the two feel similar. The Yamaha has a taller bar and higher pegs, which make the wide, flat saddle feel low, and encourage a seated riding position. The Honda, in contrast, with its new flat bar and lower footpegs, feels taller and better suited to stand-up riding, rather than sitting on the comfortable seat.

Reinforcing the difference in feel is the way the bikes' suspensions work. The Honda's softly sprung, air-adjustable Showa fork serves up a plush ride at low speeds, but bottoms easily when you wick on the power enough to blur the scenery. And, initially, the motocross-style Pro-Link rear suspension feels fairly soft, but tuning the sophisticated Showa shock—via its preload, compression and rebound damping adjustments—allows an easy fix. But even with stiffer shock settings and more oil in the fork, the Honda still easily grounds its lower frame rails and tubular aluminum engine guards, and inspires less confidence over high-speed rough stuff than the Yamaha.

The TT's stiffer suspension takes its toll at lower speeds, though, where the Yamaha's ride turns choppy. Yet although the YZ-style Monocross suspension adjusts only for rebound damping and spring preload, and provides a more limited range for fine tuning than the Honda, straight from the crate the Yamaha's suspension offers a slightly better compromise for medium and high speeds, and it suits a wider range of rider weights than the XR's.

And once they're dialed in, both these hefty thumpers display remarkable composure in the roughest and fastest sections. On a wide-open fireroad, you can pitch either bike into a corner and do a credible impression of Jay Springsteen at the Syracuse Mile. You also can take to the air as if these bikes were merely overweight motocrossers. Even in an 80-mph sandwash neither bike does anything to turn your broad grin into tight-jawed fear.

Slower sections still leave you plenty to smile about, too, particularly with the XR, because the Honda's 1.5-inch shorter wheelbase makes it steer slightly quicker than the Yamaha. Plus, the XR's lighter clutch pull and throttle action make the bike feel more agile between rocks and trees, and the softer suspension adds to its more refined actions in tight going. But don't mistake either of these friendly giants for enduro machines. Not even the Honda's state-of-the-art electronic enduro calculator can disguise the fact that the only thing these thumpers will win is your affection.

Their motors almost guaran-

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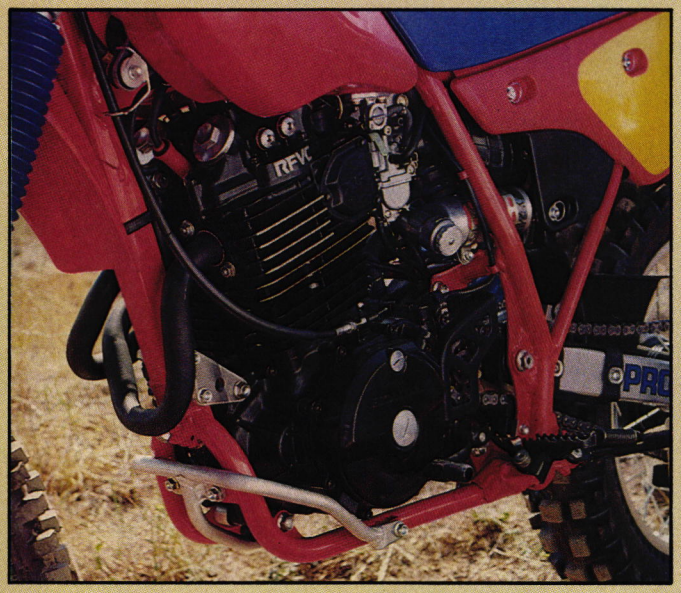
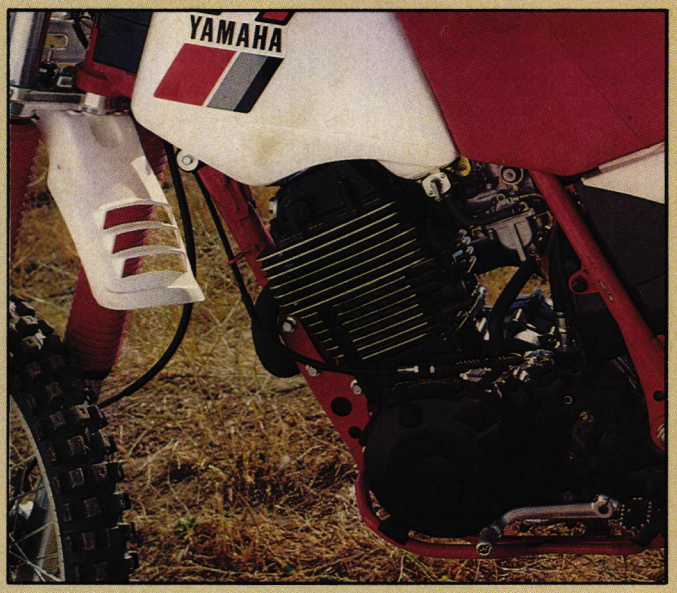




tee you'll fall for them, as well, provided that your riding style agrees with *their* style of power delivery. Because although the two engines are mechanically similar, they go about their work in radically different ways. The light-flywheel XR engine loves to rev, but it doesn't have a wide powerband by thumper standards. There's an obvious step in the powerband as you approach peak power, which often has the Honda exploding from corners with its 17-inch rear tire spinning wildly. And while that high-strung nature makes the XR fun to ride, it also demands more rider effort than the TT, and sometimes makes the Honda *feel* faster than it really is.

That's certainly not the case with the TT, because the Yamaha simply feels *slow.* The TT's exhaust note is flatter and the heavy-flywheel motor seems to have all the instant snap of a Briggs and Stratton. Plus, there's no obvious punch in the powerband to give the impression of instant acceleration. Instead, the TT600 produces a mountain of midrange that makes the five-speed gearbox seem like overkill. And despite the TT's slower feel, the bike will bury the XR in top-gear roll-ons, and it stays with the Honda when the XR hits its peak. Still, Yamaha's single is mechanically noisy and feels less smooth than the Honda when it's pushed to the limit. But those minor points are more than outweighed by the lower level of rider effort and concentration demanded by the torquey Yamaha motor.

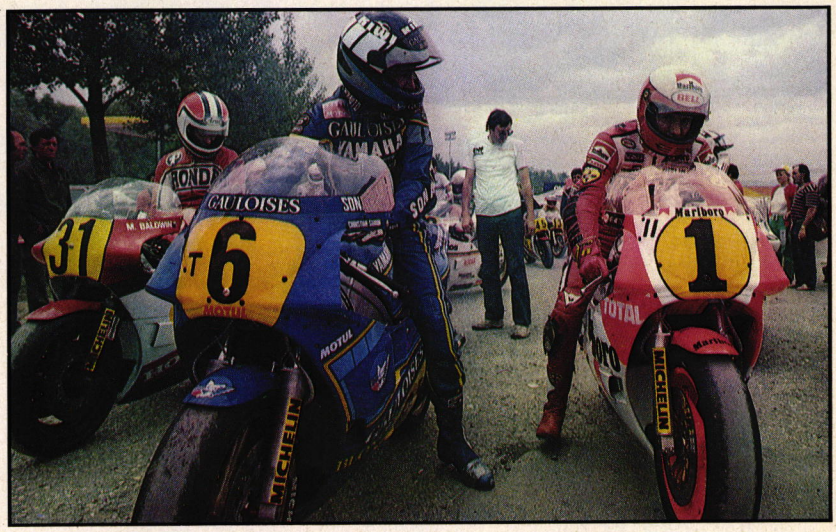
And, more than anything, the Yamaha motor's easy-going nature is what gives the TT an edge over the latest Honda. It simply makes it easier to ride the TT600 all day long, and that's what these big-bore thumpers are all about. They're not the fastest way between two points in the dirt, but they'll get you there in a series of tire-shredding slides and mile-long wheelies that a two-stroke couldn't hope to match. And when the day's finally over, neither of these thumpers will leave you aching—except possibly your jaw, from holding that ear-to-ear grin. ●

	HONDA XR600R	YAMAHA TT600
Importer	American Honda Motor Co. Inc. 100 W. Alondra Blvd. Gardena, California 90247	Yamaha Motor Corp. U.S.A. 6555 Katella Ave. Cypress, California 90630
Category	Trail	Trail
Suggested retail price	$2498	$2449
Engine type	four-stroke vertical single	four-stroke vertical single
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshaft, four valves	single overhead camshaft, four valves
Bore and stroke	97.0mm x 80.0mm	95.0 x 84.0mm
Displacement	591.2cc	595.4cc
Compression ratio	9.0:1	8.5:1
Carburetion	two 28mm Keihin slide/needle	one two-barrel Teikei Kikaki; 27mm slide/needle primary venturi, 27mm constant-vacuum secondary venturi
Gearbox	5-speed	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Showa air-spring, 43mm stanchion tube diameter/10.9 in. (276mm)	Kayaba air-spring, 43mm stanchion tube diameter/11.3 in. (287mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	Showa, 14-position adjustable compression damping, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 10mm spring preload range/11.4 in. (290mm)	Yamaha, 20-position adjustable rebound damping, 25mm spring preload range/10.7 in. (271mm)
Weight	284 lbs. (128.8kg)	283 lbs. (128.3kg)
Wheelbase	57.0 to 57.9 in. (1448 to 1471mm)	58.4 to 59.4 in. (1484 to 1510mm)
Seat height	37.2 in. (944mm)	37.2 in. (946mm)
Steering head angle	28.0 degrees from vertical	28.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.65 in. (118mm)	4.65 in. (118mm)
Top speed (observed)	86 mph (138 kph)	85 mph (137 kph)
Warranty	six months, unlimited mileage	90 days
Available color	red only	white only

SPORT LINES

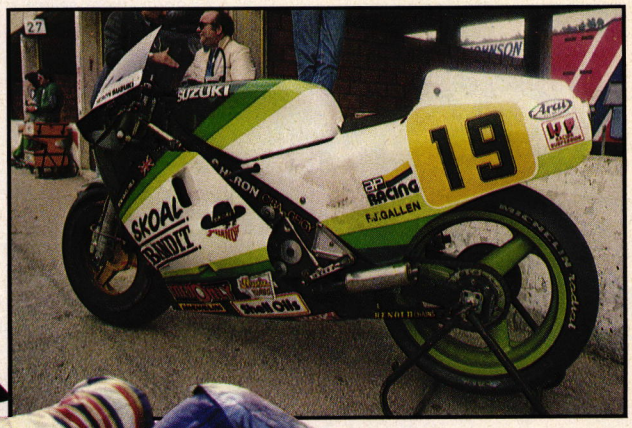
Cycle Guide's True Tales of Racecourses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

BY DAIN GINGERELLI



Grand Prix Exotica

Peeking under the fairing skirts of the factory teams.



• It was difficult to believe, but there stood Honda's ultimate GP weapon, the NSR500, almost all alone in the pits at Laguna Seca. Usually a crowd of curious onlookers swarmed around the NSR, but now only a solitary Honda mechanic stood next to the bike, waiting for Randy Mamola to take it out for qualifying at the Champion Spark Plug Classic. A photographer seized the moment, and asked the mechanic to straighten the bike's front wheel for a photo. The mechanic declined.

The photographer pleaded, "I only want to take a quick photo from the front."

"Well, OK, but *only* from the front," the mechanic replied; then he straightened the

Continued

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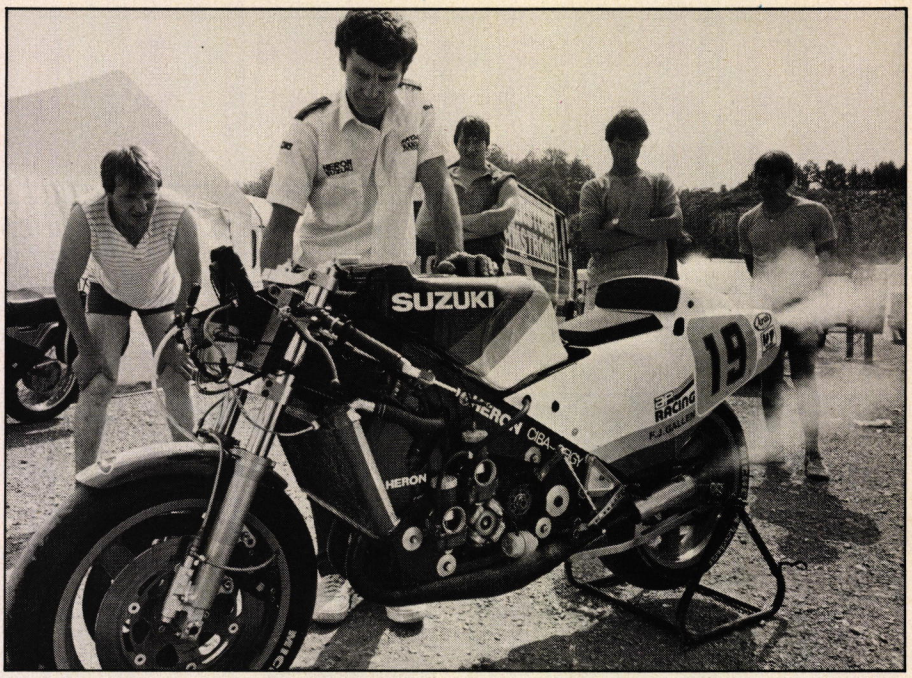


Heron-Suzuki mechanic warms up Rob McElnea's Skoal Bandit

An outdated square-four engine fits into a high-tech frame.

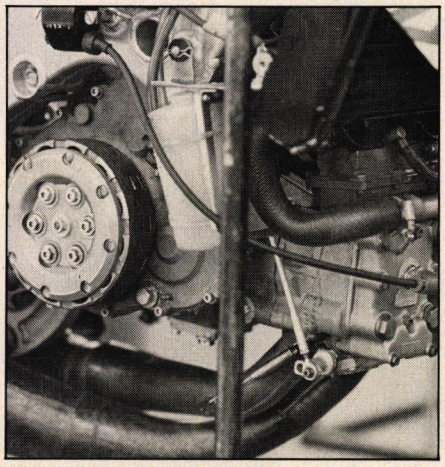
wheel. But as soon as the camera's shutter snapped, he cocked the wheel back, concealing *something* he didn't want anybody to notice. Or maybe he was amusing himself at the photographer's expense, making it *look* like the front wheel was cocked for a reason.

Scenes like that are customary with almost every factory team mechanic, too. Just by themselves, works bikes have an aura of mystery that lends them an air of untouchability, and, to compound the frustration of outsiders, team personnel often are instructed not to accommodate the curious. In other words, don't look, and don't even touch.

But this year the factory teams have let down their guard somewhat. Photographers aren't routinely chased through the pits for snapping pictures, and team members have volunteered information about the bikes. In one instance, a reporter was even invited into the Team Yamaha transporter to inspect firsthand an OW81 vee-four engine before it was bolted into Kenny Robert's Yamaha YZR at Laguna Seca.

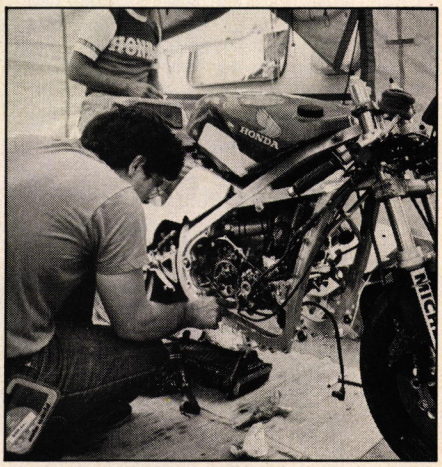
Don't be misled, though. Just because the factory teams have become slightly more communicative doesn't mean they've initiated an open-door policy concerning the exotic GP hardware. There are still many unknowns about these machines that probably won't ever see the light of day. However, we have been able to gather bits and pieces of information about some of the front-line bikes, and here's what we've discovered:

Yamaha YZR500: Defending World Champion Eddie Lawson and Kenny Roberts have described the OW81 YZR500 as the best GP machine Yamaha has ever built. Lawson says the bike steers quickly and handles well, and the engine has a wider powerband than previous vee-fours from Iwata, Japan. The OW81's 499cc liquid-cooled reed-valve vee-four is completely different from last year's OW76 en-



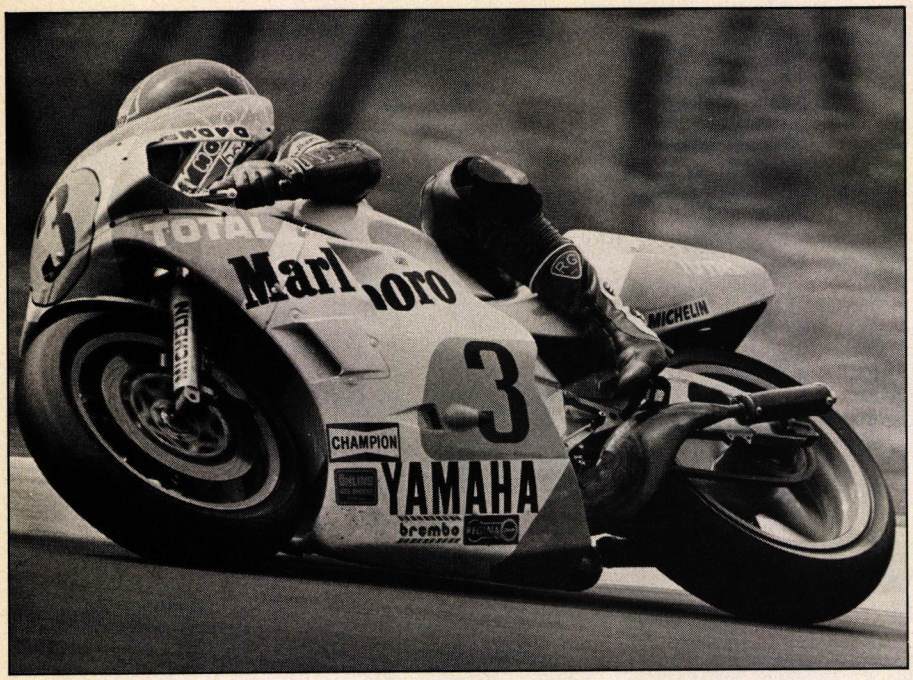
Yamaha cylinders pose for the camera

Casting for the world championship.



Bruce Mass works on Mike Baldwin's RS

Matching wits with the factories.



Team Marlboro's Raymond Roche aboard his OW81 in Italy

Putting Yamaha's Grand Prix technology to work.

gine, with the cranks' power takeoff located on the primary side of the motor (rather than in the center as on the OW76), and the entire unit is more compact.

The new, compact powerplant is suspended from a redesigned twin-spar aluminum frame, which Yamaha calls a Delta Box Frame. Although the chassis is similar to Lawson's championship-winning machine of 1984, Yamaha did relocate the engine to improve traction at the rear wheel, and the single Ohlins rear shock mounts vertically to the heavily braced "cowcatcher" aluminum swingarm. In addition, smaller diameter wheels and tires help quicken the OW81's steering; this year Lawson is using a 16-inch-front/17-inch-rear combination, in place of last year's 17/18 setup. And, as with most of the top GP bikes, the YZR500 rolls on Michelin radials. According to Lawson, the radials' major benefit is their race-long consistency. "The radials usually maintain a constant temperature throughout the race," he said. "That way you can go as fast on the final lap as you can at the beginning."

Indeed, Lawson rates the tires with the reworked chassis as the most significant improvements over last year's bike. He says the OW81 is easier to steer, and feels lighter than the OW76. As for actual weight, Yamaha claims only that the YZR500 weighs "less than 265 pounds."

Honda NSR500: Honda's not exactly passing out specifics about its vee-four, either, but many GP insiders agree the NSR weighs about 250 pounds; one source even suggested the bike weighed a portly 279. As for horsepower, Honda makes the same claim for its 90 degree vee-four motor that Yamaha has for its OW81: "Over 140."

This much *is* known about Freddie Spencer's works bike, though: The frame is built up out of box-section aluminum, and the

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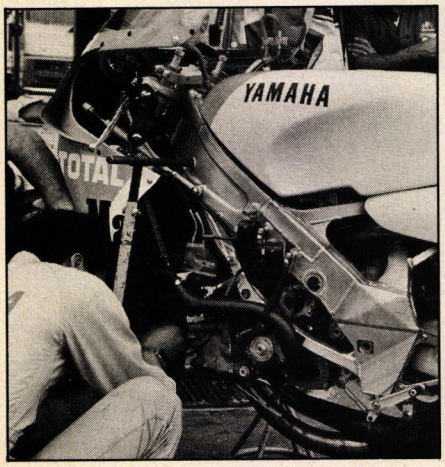
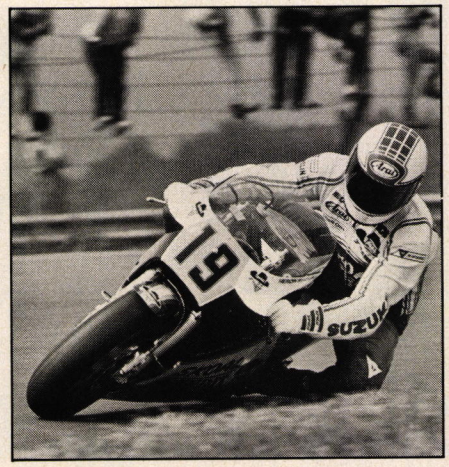


Yamaha's Delta Box Frame

Harnessing 140-plus horsepower.



Skoal Bandit sponsors Team Heron-Suzuki

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chassis has the gas tank and exhaust pipes in conventional locations. That's quite a switch from last year's NSR, a design fiasco that carried the tank underneath the engine, and routed the pipes over the top of the motor. And, like Lawson's OW, Spencer's NSR uses Michelin radials, but wheel sizes vary between 16 and 17 inches, front and rear.

Honda also changed the NSR's bore and stroke for 1985, increasing displacement from 495cc to 499cc. The intake system, though, still uses crankcase reed valves to feed the five transfer ports, and the exhaust port features Honda's patented ATAC system. The NSR sports a smaller fairing than the one on last year's bike, too, which provides better air ducting to the engine, so the new vee-four runs cooler.

Obviously, then, Honda hasn't exactly kept a lid on the NSR500's specs. But what's perhaps the worst-kept secret about the Rothmans-sponsored NSR is its sheer speed. According to Lawson, who appears to be the only rider capable of beating Spencer and his NSR500 this year in a head-to-head confrontation, the Honda accelerates with startling quickness—much quicker than Lawson's OW. And in top speed, Spencer's NSR topped 206 mph during the Belgian GP at Spa-Francorchamps last July 7. Even Rothmans-Honda teamster Randy Mamola, who won the Laguna Seca National on an NSR, said the bike accelerates so hard that he can't keep the front end down coming out of corners. In an effort to regulate the bike's wheelies around the 1.9-mile track, Mamola kept bumping up the final drive gearing until he could use only first through fifth gears, making sixth unusable for the race.

Honda NS500: Honda introduced its vee-three NS500 in 1982, and although that might make the bike seem positively ancient by GP standards, the NS wears its age well, and still can win races. For proof, Mamola led two of his NS-mounted teammates, Ron Haslam and Wayne Gardner, to a one-two-three sweep of the rain-drenched Assen TT last June.

In fact, except for Freddie Spencer, all the Rothmans-Honda riders and a majority of GP privateers ride various versions of the vee-three NS and the over-the-counter RS500. Since Spencer won the world championship with the NS500 triple in 1983, Honda has improved the bike by increasing horsepower and paying special attention to weight reduction. The 499cc engine still features piston reed-valve induction and Honda's ATAC system plumbed into the exhaust ports. Horsepower is claimed to be "over 125," but Randy Mamola speculates the factory vee-threes are producing about 135 horsepower.

Besides shaving weight and cranking up the horsepower, Honda has developed the 1985 NS to accept a 16- or 17-inch rear wheel, while the front remains a 16-incher; all three wheel sizes are made of carbon fiber. And, like the faster NSR500, the three-cylinder bike uses Michelin radials.

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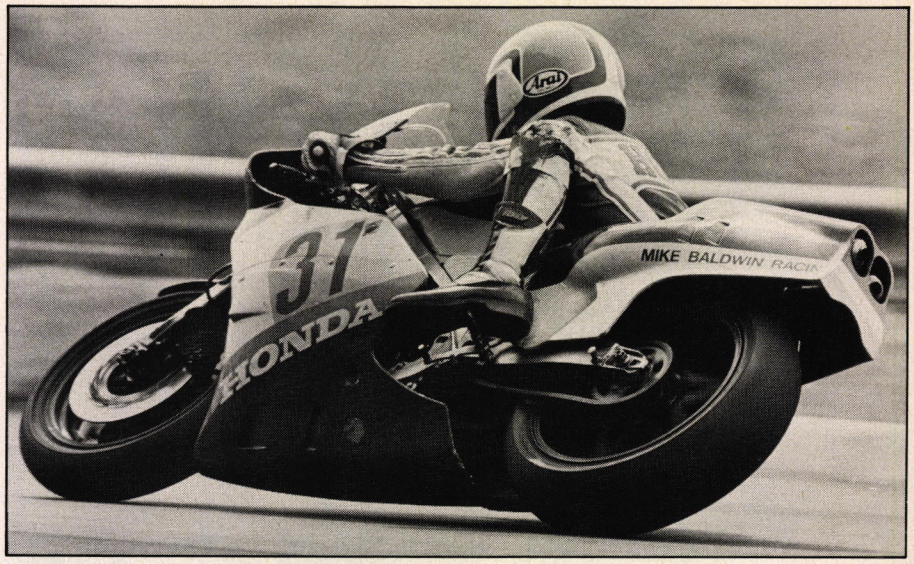
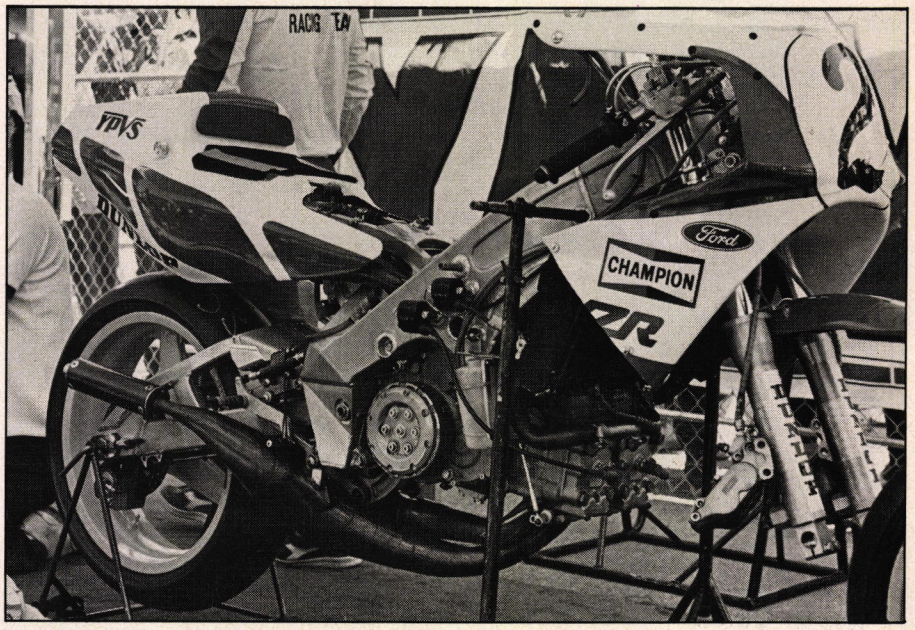


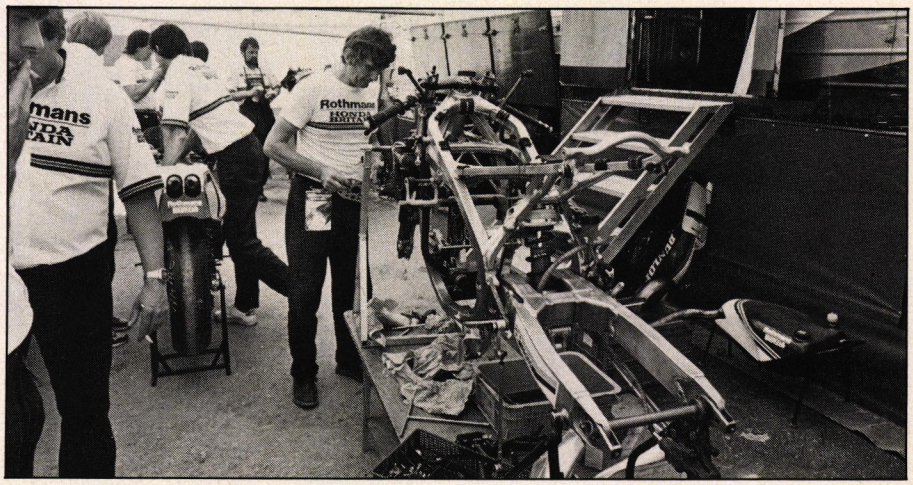
Mike Baldwin on the same RS500 that won him two AMA F1 championships

But it's not enough to bring the world to its knees.



Yamaha brought an OW81 to Laguna Seca for Kenny Roberts to ride

The factory was kind enough to let the rest of America see the bike, too.



Wayne Gardner's Rothmans-Honda, stripped to the bare chassis

Revealing the simplicity of the NS500's four-year-old design.

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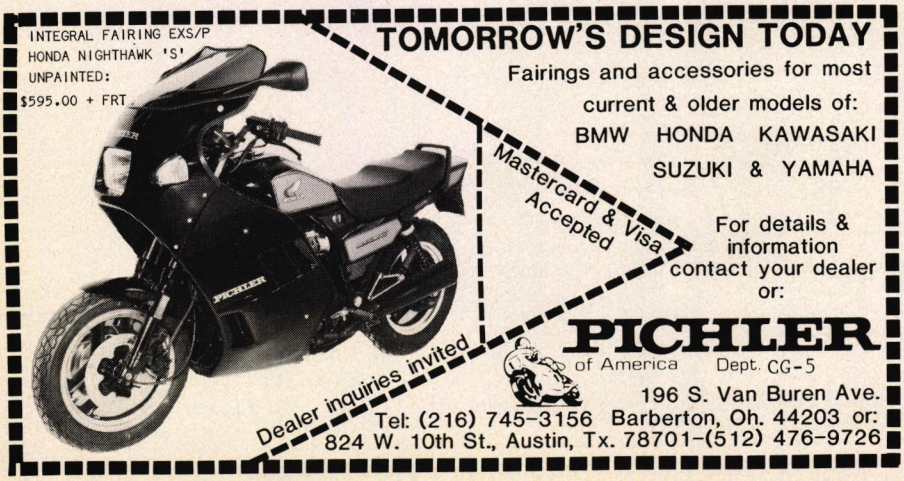
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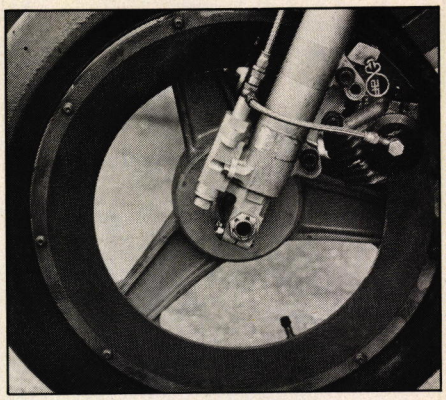


PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

Team Heron's prototype carbon-fiber disc

Making a brake for the future.

Heron-Suzuki: Ever since officially withdrawing from Grand Prix roadracing following the 1983 season, Suzuki has maintained a relationship with Team Heron of Great Britain. Basically, the firm provides Heron, Great Britain's Suzuki importer, with RG500 square-four engines, leaving chassis development to Team Heron itself. And the chassis, more than anything else, makes the Skoal Bandit-sponsored Heron machine one of the most unconventional of the 500 GP bikes. The Heron's frame consists of aluminum and carbon-fiber box sections, bonded together and filled with an aluminum honeycomb material. What's more, the frame allows adjustment of the steering head angle, and the fork has an anti-dive system.

Such features might suggest the Skoal Bandit Suzuki should be an instant winner. But in fact, Team Heron isn't concerned with beating Honda and Yamaha this year. Instead, the primary goal is to develop the chassis for next year. As team manager Gary Taylor explained at the beginning of the 1985 season, "We're more concerned with the chassis this year, so when 1986 comes around, we can put any engine in it and be competitive." That engine might or might not be a Suzuki, he said. If it is, sources close to that company's race department speculate that it will be a vee-four.

And speculation is the basic stock in trade when it comes to talking about Grand Prix hardware, especially ones like the top contenders we've examined here. Obviously, we could know a lot more about these exotic racebikes *if* the factory teams wanted us to. But don't count on that happening, because in the narrow, fiery and intensely competitive world of Grand Prix motorcycle roadracing, races—and world championships—sometimes are won and lost by tenths, even hundredths of a second. And to maintain that winning edge, however slight, requires a certain amount of secrecy that would do justice to a war effort. In short, the manufacturers try to keep their opponents guessing where they'll strike next, and never let them know more than they *want* them to know. That's the way it always has been in GP racing, and chances are, that's the way it will *stay*.

Pit Bits

• Odd man out: Randy Mamola and Kenny Roberts upheld tradition at the Laguna Seca National roadrace, July 14. Mamola and Roberts have swapped wins there for the past five years, with KR taking home the goods on even-numbered years. And because 1985 is an odd-number, it was Mamola's turn to win, which he did aboard his Honda NSR500. The odd/even script led Mamola to joke after the race, "They (AMA) wanted to give me No. 18, but I told them I wouldn't race unless I got an odd number." We'll have a full report of the Laguna Seca roadrace in the November/December issue.

• Hare today, gone tomorrow: About a year ago, Mamola also won the 1984 British Grand Prix at Silverstone, which was televised a week before Laguna Seca. The telecast of the Silverstone event showed Mamola's confrontation with a rabbit, too, but what viewers didn't see was the fate of the fleet-footed hare. "I hit him," Mamola said. "I tried to avoid him, but he ran right into my path. I nicked him with my fairing, and after the race there was rabbit's fur on one of the scoops." Mamola also said some of the Honda mechanics retrieved the rabbit off the track, and after the race asked him if he wanted one of the feet for a good luck charm. "No thanks," he said, "that wasn't a very lucky rabbit."

• World's Fastest Cameraman: Mamola made history at yet another race, too; this time at the Assen TT, where he rode with a video camera attached to his Honda NS500. The event was broadcast live on European television, and Mamola gave viewers a firsthand look of what it's like not only to race in the rain, but win. At the following GP in Belgium, he provided the TV audience with another thrill when he crashed.

• Yamaha vee-twin: Although nobody at Yamaha is confirming the rumor, there's talk that the 1986 TZ250 will have a vee-twin powerplant. One spokesman said, "If they built a vee-twin, all they have to do is cut the 500 (YZR500) in half."

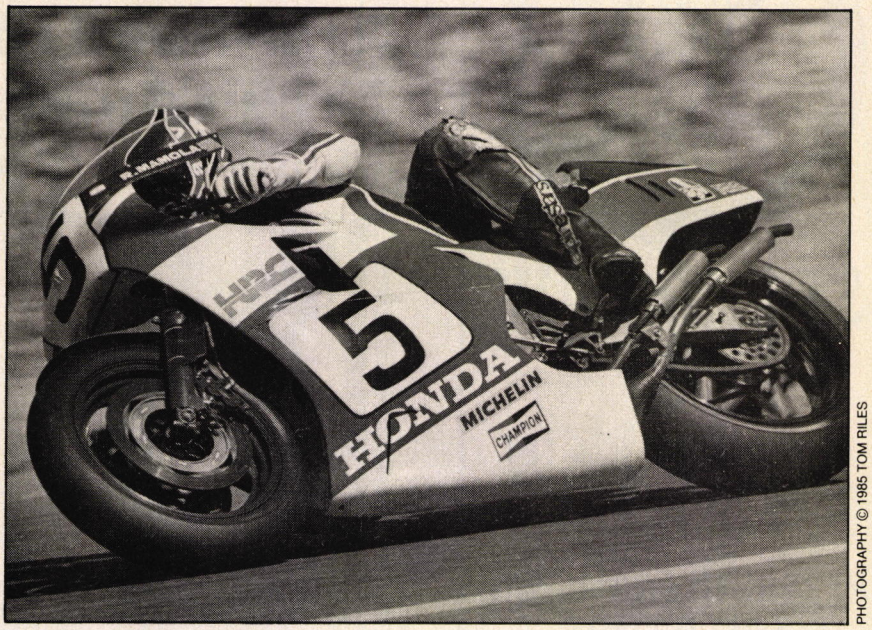
• Eddie Lawson Replicas: While there's only speculation about a vee-twin 250, an over-the-counter 500 racebike is almost a certainty. According to inside sources at Yamaha, there will be 20 YZR500-based bikes available for delivery next year. The market in Europe, one Yamaha spokesman said, is ripe for a more competitive 500, since the Honda RS500 is a proven "placer," but not a winner.

• Freddie's king: By finishing fourth aboard his Honda RS250R-W at the British GP, August 4, Freddie Spencer clinched his first 250cc world championship. And he won the 500cc race there and in Sweden the following weekend to take the 500 world championship.

• Baldwin wins: Meanwhile, in America, Mike Baldwin wrapped up his fifth AMA Formula 1 Championship by winning the Mid-Ohio National.

• IROC bikes: Rumors filtering out of BMW of North America Inc. indicate the firm might start up a special roadrace series, one similar to automobile racing's International Race of Champions (IROC). There's talk at BMW of building a limited number of race-kitted K75s—BMW's soon-to-be-introduced 750 triple—and inviting top professional riders to compete on them in a three- or four-race series. BMW would keep and maintain the bikes, and distribute them to the riders on a luck-of-the-draw basis.

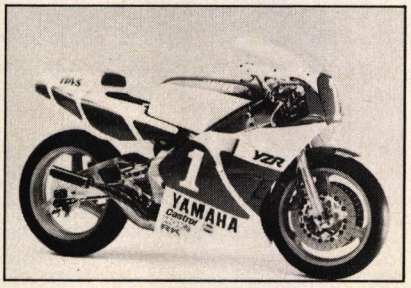
• Suzuki vee-four 500: It's almost certain Suzuki will return to Grand Prix roadracing next season—but only as an engine supplier. Sources close to Suzuki say the new motor will be a vee-four, and it's likely the firm will concentrate only on engine building, leaving chassis design and construction to various teams that are contracted to buy the new 500cc engines. Team Heron, with Skoal-Bandit backing, and Team Gallina, supported by HB International Tobacco Co., will probably get the new powerplants.

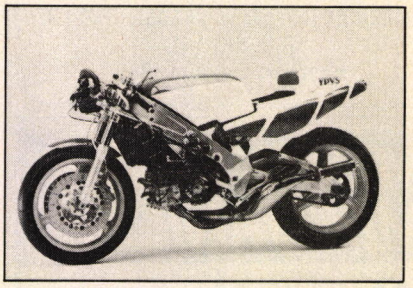


PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 TOM RILES

Randy Mamola's request was a little odd; he didn't want an even number

But there was nothing odd about his win. After all, it was his turn.





If rumors are correct, there will be about 20 more YZR500s next year

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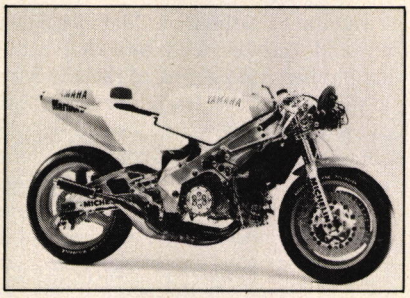

Eddie Lawson's 1985 OW81

A prototype for customers' bikes?

Continued

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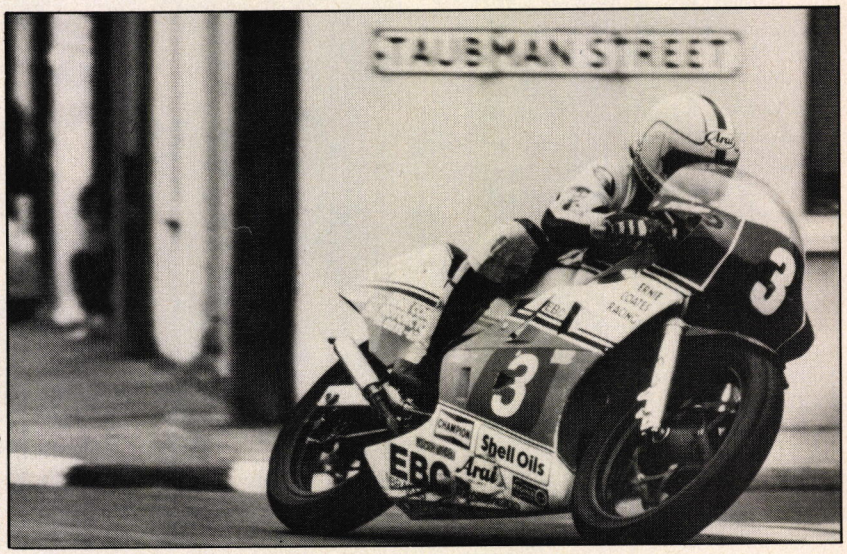
Winners & Losers

Real-Road Racers vs. Circuit Riders

Where Eddie, Freddie and Randy don't measure up.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

Joey Dunlop, one of the best real-road racers in the world

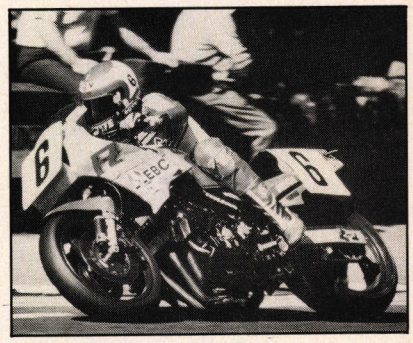
To prove the point, he won three Isle of Man TT races this year.

• You might believe that Randy Mamola, 1983 World Champion Freddie Spencer and current World Champion Eddie Lawson are the best roadracers in the world, but Mick Grant doesn't think so. According to Grant—a seven-time Isle of Man TT winner—a quiet, unassuming Irishman named Joey Dunlop holds the title.

In Grant's estimation, Mamola, Spencer and Lawson don't rate that highly simply because not one of the trio actually *roadraces*; at least, not by Grant's definition of the word. Instead, they're circuit racers, riders who compete on purpose-built racetracks. Real-road racers, Grant says, compete on road courses, tracks that normally are used as public roads six days of the week, then given over to racing on the seventh day. To Grant, tracks such as the Isle of Man, Scarborough in England, and many lesser-known Irish tracks qualify as *real*-road racetracks.

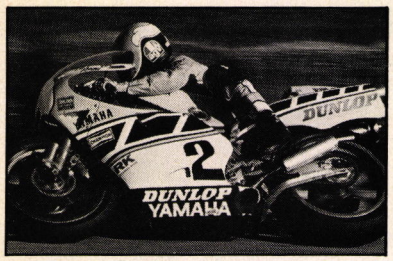
But although it's easy to distinguish between a road course and a circuit, it's practically impossible to say whether or not a circuit rider actually is *better* than a real-road racer. Both types of racing require different talents and styles to succeed. Even Dunlop, a master street-racer, found it difficult to adjust to racing on a closed circuit. Going "flat out," he says, "caused me to worry about falling off." And that's because he rarely goes flat out on the road courses he competes on; he's developed a different technique for going fast than that of most circuit riders.

On the other hand, racers such as Kenny Roberts prefer to ride at the limit of their abilities on circuit tracks, a style that isn't suitable for road courses. As Roberts put it, "A guy like myself isn't going to go to the Isle of Man and ride 100 percent of my capability." And Roberts' reasoning is simple: His racing skills are sharpened to make him go as fast as he possibly can, and he says he can't do that on a course with slippery manhole covers and curbstones lining the apexes. Adding to his apprehension



Steve Parrish at the Isle of Man

A circuit racer on the road again.



Kenny Roberts on a circuit course

Where he can ride 100 percent.

is the risk of falling, because a crash on a road course sometimes means hitting something solid, such as a house, a stone wall or a tree. "I can't see racing there (IoM) and hoping that a tree doesn't jump out in front of me," he said.

Real-road racers, though, *are* willing to cope with the roadside hazards. They understand that riding "100 percent," as Roberts defines it, through certain street corners can be unnecessarily dangerous, and so they make allowances. Steve Parrish, for example, a veteran of both types of racing, said, "I leave two yards at the edge of the road—for safety," when he's competing on a road course. Parrish actually gets closer than that, but he still believes his margin for error increases his odds for survival, even at speed.

There are other secrets to riding fast in real-road racing, too, without needlessly amplifying the dangers. And one of Grant's favorite tricks is to short-shift (upshifting before redline) the engine when exiting a corner, a technique that reduces wheelspin. Wheelspin might be useful to a circuit rider, who can use the resultant slide to good advantage. The slide also can turn into a lowside, or a highside, though, crashes that can have dire consequences on a road course.

But according to Dunlop, the best method for going fast is to know the road. Naturally a fast rider must be able to memorize a track's sequence of turns, but Dunlop says it's important to know as much as possible about the road surface, too. "You have to know the road to use it to your advantage," he said. For instance, a rider can use far more power through banked—or positive camber—corners than he can in off-camber turns.

Yet despite the differences, both forms of roadracing invariably involve high speeds, something all riders respect. Because when a rider falls, even on a circuit course, he runs the risk of getting hurt. And that risk led real-road racer Roger Marshall to say with a bit of sarcasm, "I still think that races should be won at the lowest possible speed." That's something with which, deep down inside, almost every roadracer—circuit and real-road alike—would be quick to agree. —*Dain Gingerelli* ●

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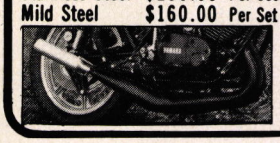

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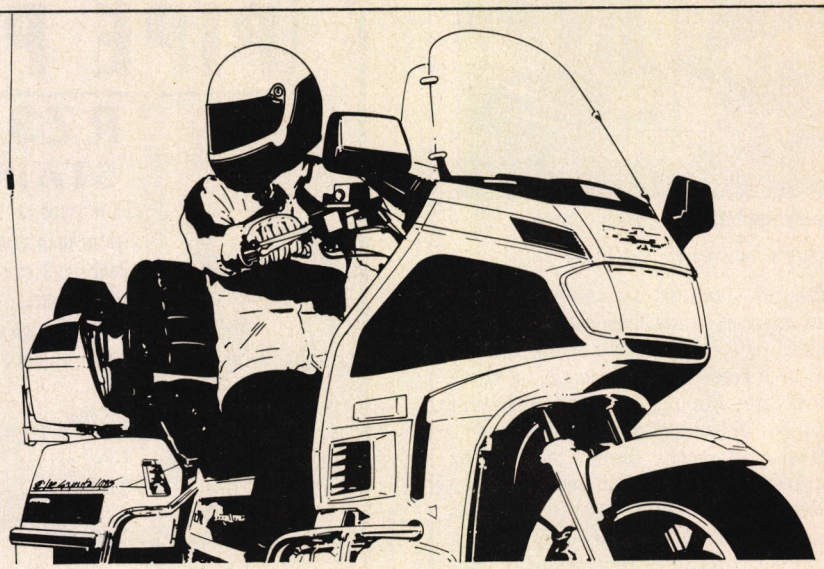
LETTERS *A cavalcade of critics, biting the bullet and Alpine allure*



IN PRAISE OF PASSENGERS

It was certainly heartbreaking to read Marc Cook's Cavalcade test (August 1985). Some other passengers may miss out on a great bike if his knocks are believed.

I rode on the back of a Honda Gold Wing for three years and felt like a saddlebag just hanging on. We took a 4166-mile trip out West, riding over 525 miles a day through temperatures of 110, crosswinds and road delays. One day we even went 660 miles; not bad for a 46-year-old housewife. I thought there was no way to pack for two weeks in the luggage space, but there was, with space left over. We brought back numerous items, and nothing was broken, spilled or wet.

Thanks, Suzuki, it's about time someone cared about the passenger.

Doris Watson
Cincinnati, Ohio

AMBIDEXTROUS BIKE

Did Suzuki give you a one-of-a-kind Cavalcade, or did your photographer print the negative backwards? In your photo on page 48, the throttle is on the left and the clutch on the right!

Dale Blythe
Puryear, Tennessee

Actually, the printer provides those special models—ed.

EFFETE SNOBS?

I have a new Suzuki LX, and over half the statements in your test are self-contradictory.

It only took me about five minutes to figure out how to get the right amount of air for riding one or two up on this bike. The Honda Aspencade puts more heat on the legs than the LX; the Suzuki puts more air on the legs but its only about 20 percent engine heat.

What's better on the LX is the ride, less noise, the seat, rear shocks, saddle bags, movable trunk, windshield, brakes, rear floor boards, passenger seat and back rest. Almost all other bikes have some of these features, but only Suzuki has them all. I buy a touring bike for comfort, dependability, beauty and performance, not your opinion of which has the most snob appeal.

Ellis Tobias
Moscow Mills, Missouri

Sold your Venture, eh Tobias?—ed.

NO SNOW JOB

A few months ago at age 35, I obtained my motorcycle license because I fell in love with owning a touring bike. I have limited availability in seeing the different bikes, but advertising pamphlets helped me set my preferences.

Your test on the Suzuki Cavalcade changed my order. The Suzuki fell from second to fourth behind the Voyager, Aspencade and Venture. My preference right now is the Kawasaki, although I'm still not ruling out one of the others. Harley-Davidsons *are* out. If I wanted belt drive, I would buy a snow machine.

Marcel Boulard
Whitefish, Ontario
Canada

OFF TARGET

Your Silver Bullet missed the mark. Yamaha's V-Max is just a copy of the Harley vee-twin. If the award is based on "straight-line performance," as Charles Everitt says in your August 1985 issue, the H-D FXRS Low Glide '85 wins on performance. It has more displacement than the V-Max, and more miles to the gallon—I got almost 50 mpg on a 5000-mile trip to Atlanta—and the belt final drive beats a chain or shaft. The new Evolution engine is superb. Class plus performance results in the Cloak of Chrome.

Chuck Woodard
Port Hueneme, California

That's exactly why the V-Max won—ed.

ENTERPRISING AWARD

Your Silver Bullet article is an excellent example of just how good a free enterprise system works. Each year you present us with a new, faster, more reliable product from someone different. It seems that no other industry in the world is as competitive. And who benefits from all this? Motorcycle riders.

Such competition breeds better products at a better price. Someone should point that out to the government, which believes in restricting what you and I can buy. If the manufacturers can't make a competitive product at a competitive price, they should get out of the kitchen! Is anyone up in Detroit listening?

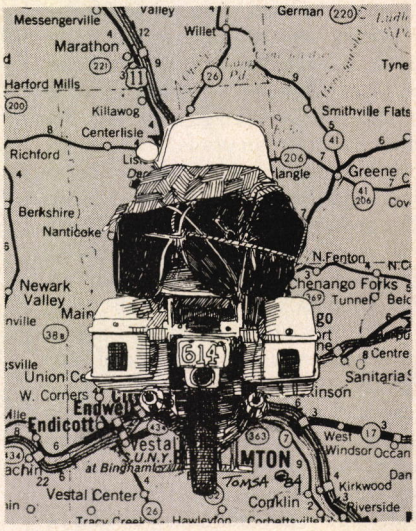
G. E. Sieja
Hampton, Virginia

No, they stepped into the kitchen to mix up a fresh batch of metaphors—ed.

EGO TO THE MAX

Your reasons for selecting the grossly overpowered V-Max ego-machine over real motorcycles for Bike of the Year bug the enthusiast in me.

If the V-Max "will influence the future of motorcycling" and "force other manufacturers to respond in kind," then the sport is in for big trouble. The pur-



LETTERS

pose of the V-Max, in my mind, is to merely stroke the puny egos of "riders" who spend more time watching their reflections in streetside windows than the road in front of them.

My vote is for any machine ridden for the simple fun of riding, one that allows a newcomer to discover the joy of being on a motorcycle.

Paul Golde
Costa Mesa, California

Like your Rebel, Golde?—ed.

NEW OPPOSITION

I recently read my first copy of CYCLE GUIDE. Just who in the hell do these 55 Club members think they are? We should do something about their foolish BS, like organize an anti-55 club. I'm strongly against ignorant, uneducated scumbags who don't know a motorcycle from a hole in the ground. Let's stomp on the 55 Club; it makes me want to puke.

Grant D. Aldrich
Vickery, Ohio

Don't hold back; how do you really feel about it?—ed.

VIEW FROM THE TOP

The article on the Alps Tour a la Plesman was fantastic. But your satellite drawing of Europe and a few city names just won't cut it. I need the tour broken down to right and left turns that I can see from my tankbag.

Joe Black
Portland, Oregon

Must get pretty cramped riding in a bag—ed.

MIXED REVIEWS

I'm glad you crowned the V-Max as the world's fastest motorcycle (July 1985). You went to the trouble of running the tests at a special track, etc. and even took one apart to check it. There will always be someone griping that you picked the wrong bike.

I'd also like to say that your test reports seem biased; the riders have a personal preference as to what a bike should be like. This does nothing to help a prospective buyer.

Jake Kindom
Minneapolis, Minnesota

You'd prefer we liked all of them, or none?—ed.

RIDING REPELLENT

I have a quarrel with those who say to ride courteously. Not being seen is the number one cause of death among motorcycle riders. The obnoxious have a way of being seen.

Loud pipes, high profiles and wild colors that make auto drivers look at you also tend to get bad attention from the law. Yet being obnoxious can be done legally. Simply make the first move, ride from hole to hole in traffic and get the right-of-way despite the order, if you can do it avoiding accidents.

Gary Koontz
Paso Robles, California

Being seen is important, but the holes aren't in traffic—ed.

HEAVYWEIGHT LOVE

In response to Arron Pascal's letter (July 1985): Rest easy, Mr. Pascal. According to *my* wife, my 1980 Yamaha XS850 is my mistress, and I agree.

I ride it whenever I feel like it, and it never complains of a headache. It doesn't get jealous when I look at other bikes. On certain kinky country roads we know, it cries out from between my legs, "Harder, faster, deeper!" I try to keep our relationship discreet, but I buy it expensive presents now and then, like tires and mufflers. My wife does get a little jealous.

Although several positions are possible, I prefer only the ones with me on top. I've never actually slept with my Yamaha; I have this fear of it falling on me.

John Oakley
Baltimore, Maryland

AMAZONLY SIMPLE

CYCLE GUIDE is something else. For the past few months, I've been thinking about building a bike. I'd just about gotten the choice of engines down, when lo, I see the Amazonas (Guide Lines, July 1985).

How could I dare think of any other motor? The air-cooled VW is super reliable and dirt cheap. Now my only problem is do I break out the tubing and heliarc now, or wait for the gearbox and rear-end pieces from Amazonas?

Chris Stein
Belton, Missouri

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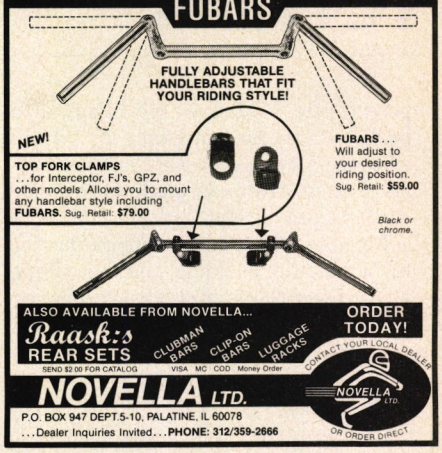
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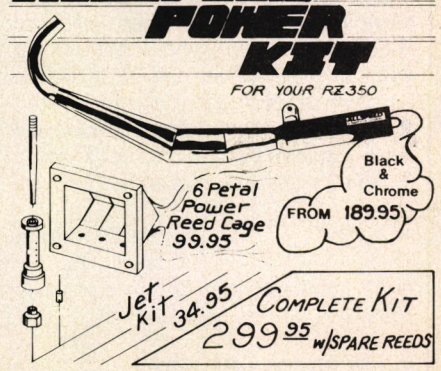

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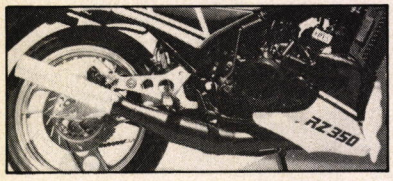

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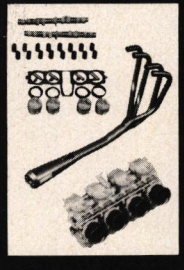

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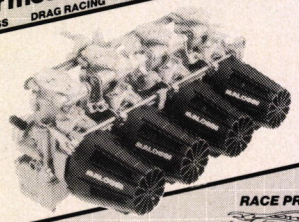

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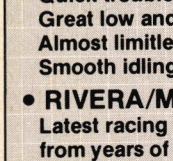

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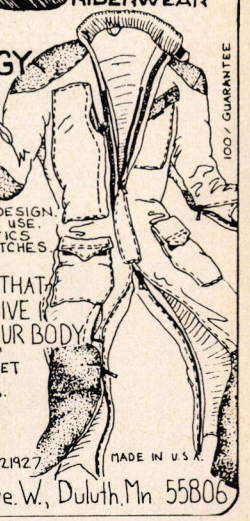

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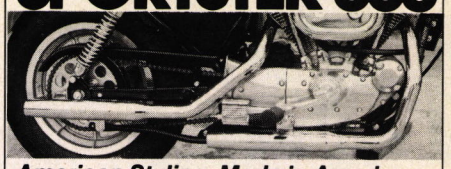

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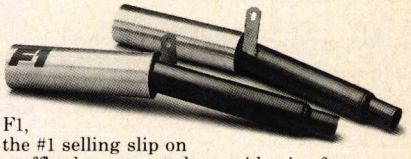

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British Marketing 77
Brown's Plating Service 77

Cal Fab, Inc. 77
Carl's Honda 75
Carrera Helmets Cov.2
Champion Moriwaki USA 40
Competition Access. 30-31,34
Cosmopolitan Motors Inc. 62,74
Cycle Shack, Inc. 77
Cycle Sound 76
Cycle Sports & Service 76

Denver Used M/C Parts 76
Derale Oil Coolers 77
DG Perf. Specialties, Inc. 37

Eastern Cycle Salvage Inc. 75
Eastwood Eng. Co. 77
Euro Cycle Imports 77
Expert Cycle 75

F-1 Mufflers 77
Factory Pipe Products 71

Hang 2 74,76

Kawasaki Motor Corp. 4-5
Kerker 65-67,68
Dennis Kirk 32

Leather Dist. of America 77

M.A.P. Cycle Ent. 76
Midwest Action Cycle 75
Mike's Cycle 75
Moore's Cycle Supply 74
Motorace 38,39
M/C Mechanics Institute 62
Moto-X Fox 77
M-Star Motorcycles 74

Norris Cycle Products 74
No. Amer. School of M/C Repair 73
Novella Ltd. 74

Ontario Moto Tech 74

Pichler of America 68
PJ1 Corp. 77

Racers Supply 75
Rick's Tricks 77
Rivera Eng. 76
R.J. Reynolds/Salem 13
R.J. Reynolds/Winston Cov.4
RK Chain 40
RSC Performance 74

SBS Brake Pads 37
Seattle FilmWorks 75
Shoei Safety Helmet Co. Cov.3
Silhouette Fairings 74
Spartan Clothing 48A-48D
Star Cycle Accessories 63
Suzuki Parts Store 78

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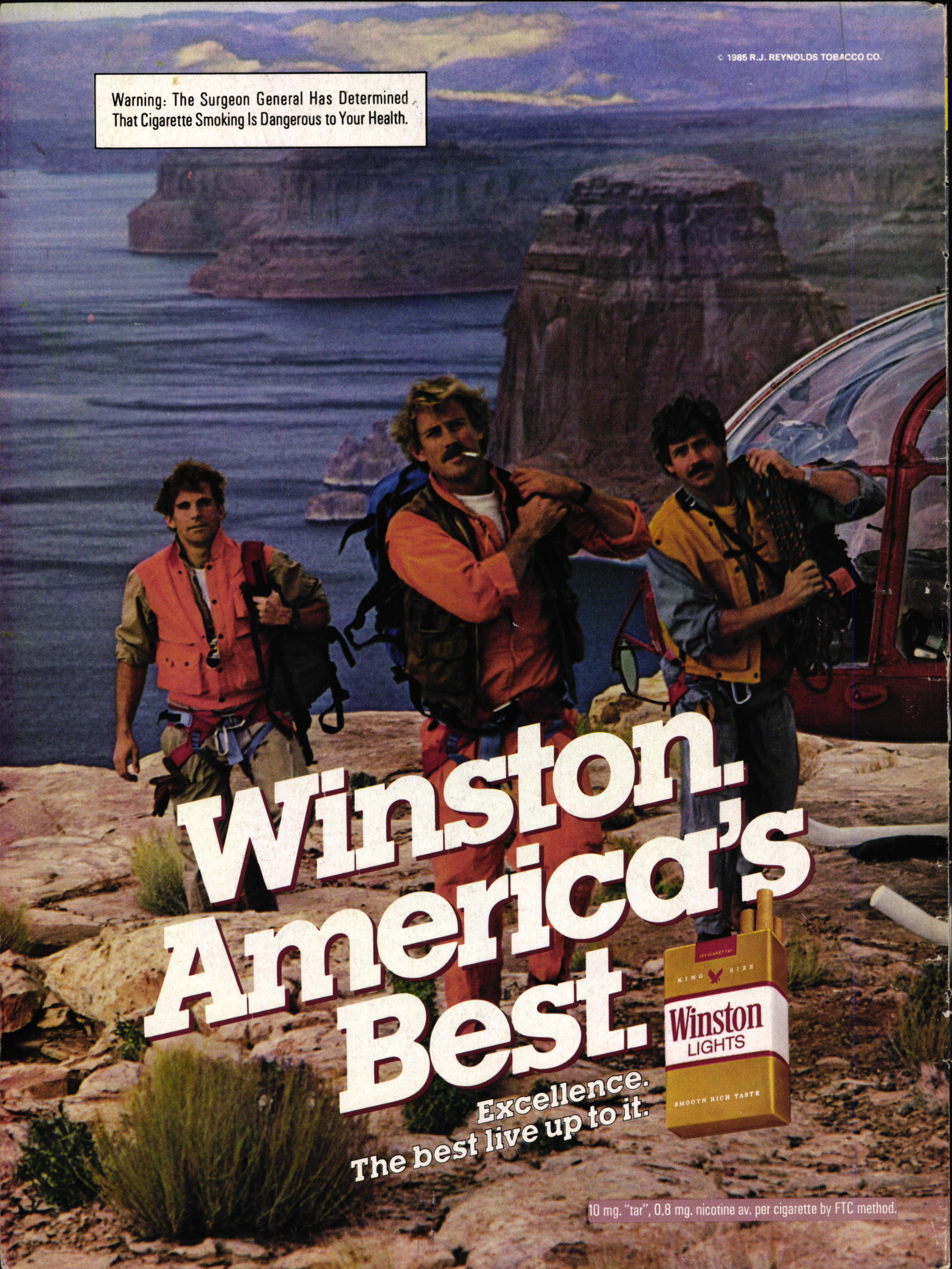

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